SAT. SPECIAL / D1

Helen Mirren's 2
award-winning
Elizabeths compared

SPORTS / A21

Magada, Miñoza
hound Philippine
Open leaders

WORLD / A19

Police question Blair
second time over
'cash-for-honors' probe

BUSINESS / B1

BSP clears $600-M loan
from China for Northrail,
Customs inspection project

Image problem? Have no fear, Boy Abunda's here

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

IMAGE PROBLEM? PREGNANT BUT STILL A virgin? Tested positive for a sexually transmitted infection?

Don't fret. Boy Abunda is here. The television host/talent manager/publicist has helped celebrities get out of uh, delicate situations which otherwise could have ended their careers.

IMAGE/ A6

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Saturday, February 3, 2007 ★★ 5 sections / Vol. 22 / No. 57 P18 website: www.inquirer.net

Macho nature blamed for Ebdane's short fuse

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan and Nikko Dizon

BLAME IT ON HIS "MACHO" nature.

A senior official of the Department of National Defense yesterday sought to clarify a statement made by

MACHO/ A15

BUTI DI PINATANGGAL ANG HIGH HEELS!

48 bolt N. Cotabato jail

UN report says global warming unstoppable

PARIS—GLOBAL WARMING WAS almost certainly caused by humans and would be unstoppable for centuries to come, an authoritative UN climate report warned yesterday.

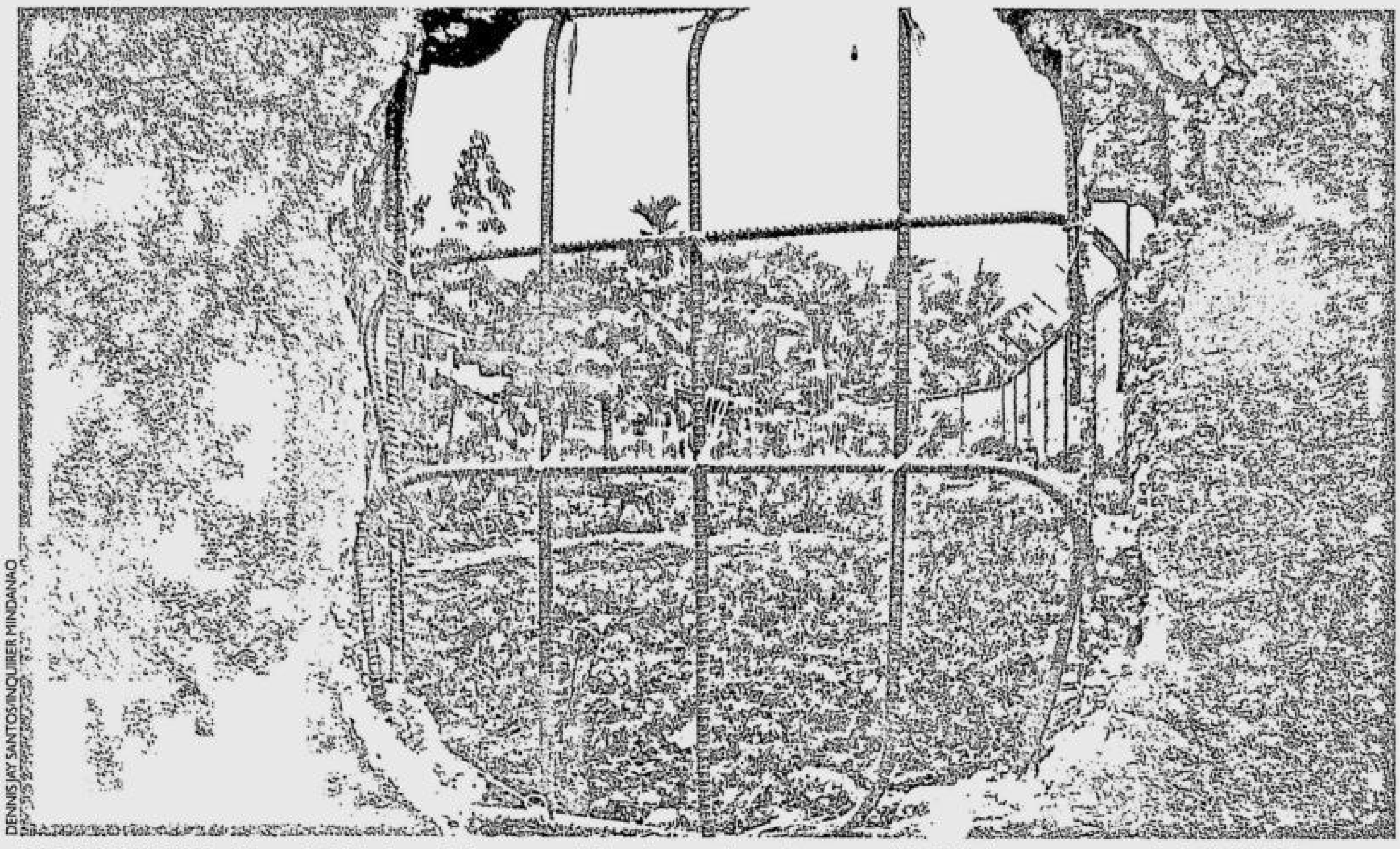
The report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) said warming over the past century was "very likely"—a certitude of 90 percent—caused by human activity.

The exhaustive study by 2,500 scientists from more than 100 countries sounds alarms about the impact of greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere, and is designed to help policy makers.

And the report said no matter how much civilization slows or reduces its greenhouse gas emissions, global warming and sea level rise would continue on for centuries.

"This is just not something you can stop. We're just going to have to live with it," co-author Kevin Trenberth, director of climate analysis for the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colorado, said in an interview. "We're creating a different planet. If you were to come up back in 100 years' time, we'll have a different climate."

UN REPORT/ A15


DENNIS JAY SANTOS/INQUIRER MINDANAO

HOLE IN THE WALL: Through this hole made by a grenade launcher on the perimeter wall behind the one-story provincial jail in Kidapawan City, 48 inmates escaped aided by about 60 heavily armed men suspected to be MILF rebels before dawn on Friday. They did it in 15 minutes.

Bombing suspects sprung by armed men

By Inquirer Mindanao

KIDAPAWAN CITY—IT was a raid the authorities had been warned about days earlier. Still, when it happened, it took suspected Moro insurgents only 15 minutes to spring 48 inmates—including three alleged bombers—from the North Cotabato provincial jail.

Lobbing grenades, dozens of heavily armed-raiders suspected to belong to the Moro Islamic Liberation Front blasted their way into the compound at 1 a.m. yesterday and freed their three comrades, as well as nine suspected murderers and 14 linked to illegal drugs, among other people, officials said.

The spectacular breakout in Kidapawan City—which occurred while some of the guards were in their sleeping quarters—occurred a day after security forces raided a suspected Moro terrorist hideout in Metro Manila, foiling what an official said was a possible bomb attack in the capital.

North Cotabato Gov. Emmanuel Piñol said that days before the attack, there were already intelligence reports that rebels would raid the jail.

"That's why I was asking the Department of Justice for the immediate transfer of high-profile inmates to Manila as a preventive measure," Piñol said.

"Now, it's too late."

Reuters news agency also quoted Piñol as saying: "We were caught with our pants down."

The Kidapawan raid was the second raid staged by suspected MILF rebels on a jail facility in Mindanao in less than five months.

The provincial jail has 789 in-

48 BOLT/ A8

DOJ upgrades case vs Leviste to murder

Prosecutor cites cruelty, treachery, premeditation

By Leila B. Salaverria

CITING CRUELTY, TREACHERY and premeditation, the Department of Justice yesterday recommended that the homicide charge against former Batangas Gov. Jose Antonio Leviste for the killing of his longtime associate be upgraded to murder.

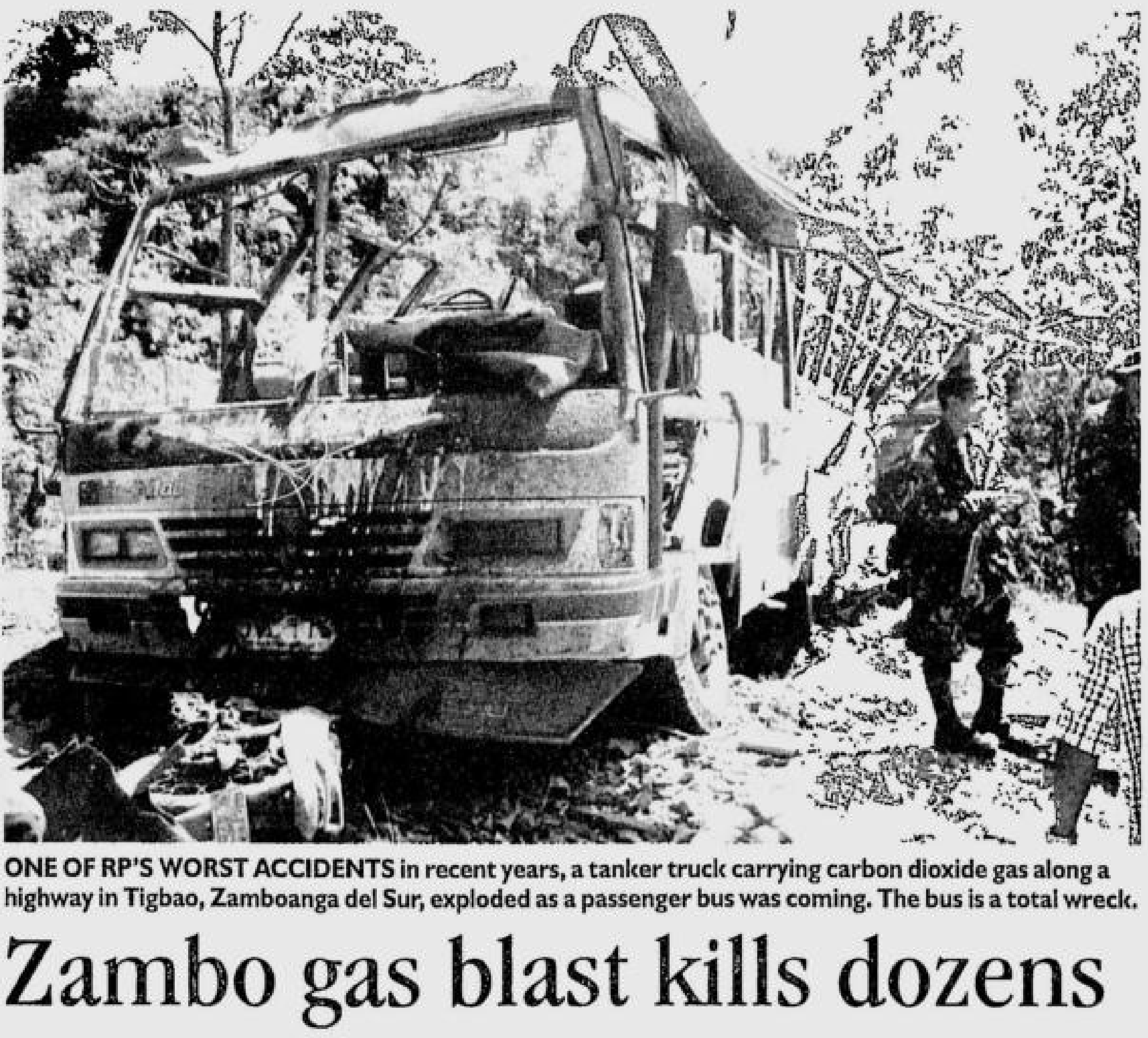
Senior State Prosecutor Emmanuel Velasco said in a resolution that Leviste had also conspired with others in the Jan. 12 killing of Rafael de las Alas, thus the DOJ recommendation that a number of John and Jane Does be included in the murder charge.

Velasco added that the crime scene—Leviste's office at the LPL Towers in Makati City—was tampered with before police could process it, as shown by the state of De las Alas' body.

The prosecutor also filed before the Makati Regional Trial Court a motion to admit the amended information against the ex-governor.

Leviste, the estranged husband of former Sen. Loren Legarda, is out on bail. He surrendered to

DOJ UPGRADES/ A6


APPIA REGION-9

ONE OF RP'S WORST ACCIDENTS in recent years, a tanker truck carrying carbon dioxide gas along a highway in Tigbao, Zamboanga del Sur, exploded as a passenger bus was coming. The bus is a total wreck.

Zambo gas blast kills dozens

By Hernan P. dela Cruz and Julie S. Alipala
Inquirer Mindanao

TIGBAO, ZAMBOANGA DEL Sur—Dozens of people were killed yesterday when a trailer truck carrying chemicals overturned and exploded, ripping apart a passenger bus that was passing by and hurling body parts onto treetops, officials and witnesses said.

Police said the truck smashed into a roadside hill before it overturned, emitting smoke. Twenty minutes later, it exploded.

Tigbao Mayor Edmundo Dalid said reports reaching him indicated the number of those killed had reached 50. Other officials put the death toll at between 22 and 30 in one of the worst road accidents to occur in the country in recent years.

More than 20 others were rushed to hospitals with burns and injuries from splintered metals, Dalid said.

Reports were conflicting on what kind of chemicals was on the truck when it overturned and slammed into a roadside hill near a ravine in Barangay Lacupayan in this town near Pagadian City.

Army 1st Infantry Division Commander Brig. Gen. Raymundo Ferrer initially said the truck was carrying tanks of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG). But regional police head Chief Supt. Jaime Caringal said later investigators had found out that the truck was carrying a big tank of carbon dioxide (C02) and some caustic soda.

Carbon dioxide is used in many

ZAMBO/ A9

Loren's Senate run may end protest case vs Noli

By TJ Burgonio and Cynthia D. Balana

THE LAWYER OF VICE PRESIDENT Noli de Castro in the election protest case filed by former Sen. Loren Legarda at the Supreme Court said he would file a motion to dismiss the protest the moment Legarda filed her certificate of candidacy.

Romulo Macalintal said Legarda's election protest against De Castro would be deemed abandoned once she files her candidacy for the May senatorial elections.

"Yes, I'm running ... I'm likely to run," Legarda said yesterday at a press forum in the Senate, but stressed that she would make the formal announcement before Feb. 12, the deadline for the filing of the certificate of candidacy.

Legarda, 47, said that her case, now pending in the Supreme Court, did not pose an impediment to her filing a certificate of candidacy, and that if

LOREN'S/ A6

Families of achieving students use 5 strategies, study shows

By Queena N. Lee-Chua

(Last of two parts)

SPECIAL REPORT

GOOD STUDY HABITS ARE formed in children early on, such as a set routine for work and play. And parents play a fundamental role in the formation.

For two years, Ma. Isabel Sison-Dionisio, Nerisa Fernandez and I studied more than 2,000 families of achieving students in Marikina and Bulacan. These families used five strategies—discipline, goal-setting, self-reliance, strong family bonds and a home fit for learning.

Most of the parents in our survey were the first and primary teachers of their children. They did not complete college or sometimes even high school, but this does not stop them from tutoring their children in the early years and monitoring their homework until they are responsible enough to do so on their own.

The parents supervise homework, provide guidance, do exam reviews, look for references (mostly secondhand books or those on sale) and try as best they can to financially provide for school.

Most of the children love to

FAMILIES/ A6

AUGUST DELA CRUZ

THE ALCAUSINS, mother Liberty and son Francis

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with rainshowers and thunderstorms. Eastern Luzon and Visayas will have mostly cloudy skies with scattered light rains. The rest of the country will be cloudy with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms.

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Partly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

COMPILED BY: KATE PEDROSO, INQUIRER RESEARCH/02/02/07 SOURCE: PAGASA

Police identify bomb signature

By Alcuin Papa

POLICE ANALYSIS OF THE BOMB COMPONENTS recovered from a raid on a suspected terrorist safe house in Taytay, Rizal last Thursday revealed that the bomb was intended to injure large gatherings of people, officials said yesterday.

Sr. Supt. Asher Dolina, head of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) in the National Capital Region, said police have identified the "signature" in the bomb components they recovered.

Bomb makers tend to favor a distinctive way of putting a bomb together called a "signature." Identification of the signature helps in tracing the bomb maker.

According to Dolina, the discovery of nails among the bomb components meant that the bomb makers were targeting civilians, not buildings and structures.

He was certain the improvised explosive device (IED) was intended for use in a gathering with a lot of people.

"This will have maximum effect with a lot of injuries and deaths," Dolina said.

"If it was for buildings and structures, there would have been a high explosive content. IEDs with fragments like nails are for maximum injuries," Dolina explained.

The police official said the signature used in the components recovered from the Taytay raid had been used before, in past bombing incidents which he did not enumerate.

Dolina lamented, however, that the three suspects arrested in the Taytay raid, identified as Sandiali and Jukarnen Utto and Alimuddin Abdullah, could end up being released because of the absence of an antiterrorism law in the country.

Police were only able to file a case of illegal possession of firearms and explosives, a bailable offense, against the three who, police allege, are former members of the special operations group of the secessionist Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF-SOG).

"In other countries, any connection to terrorism that police can find on suspects can make them liable under their terrorism laws. We believe there should be an antiterror law with teeth to deal specifically with these people," Dolina said.

If the suspects do get out, Dolina said the police would just have to subject them to surveillance.

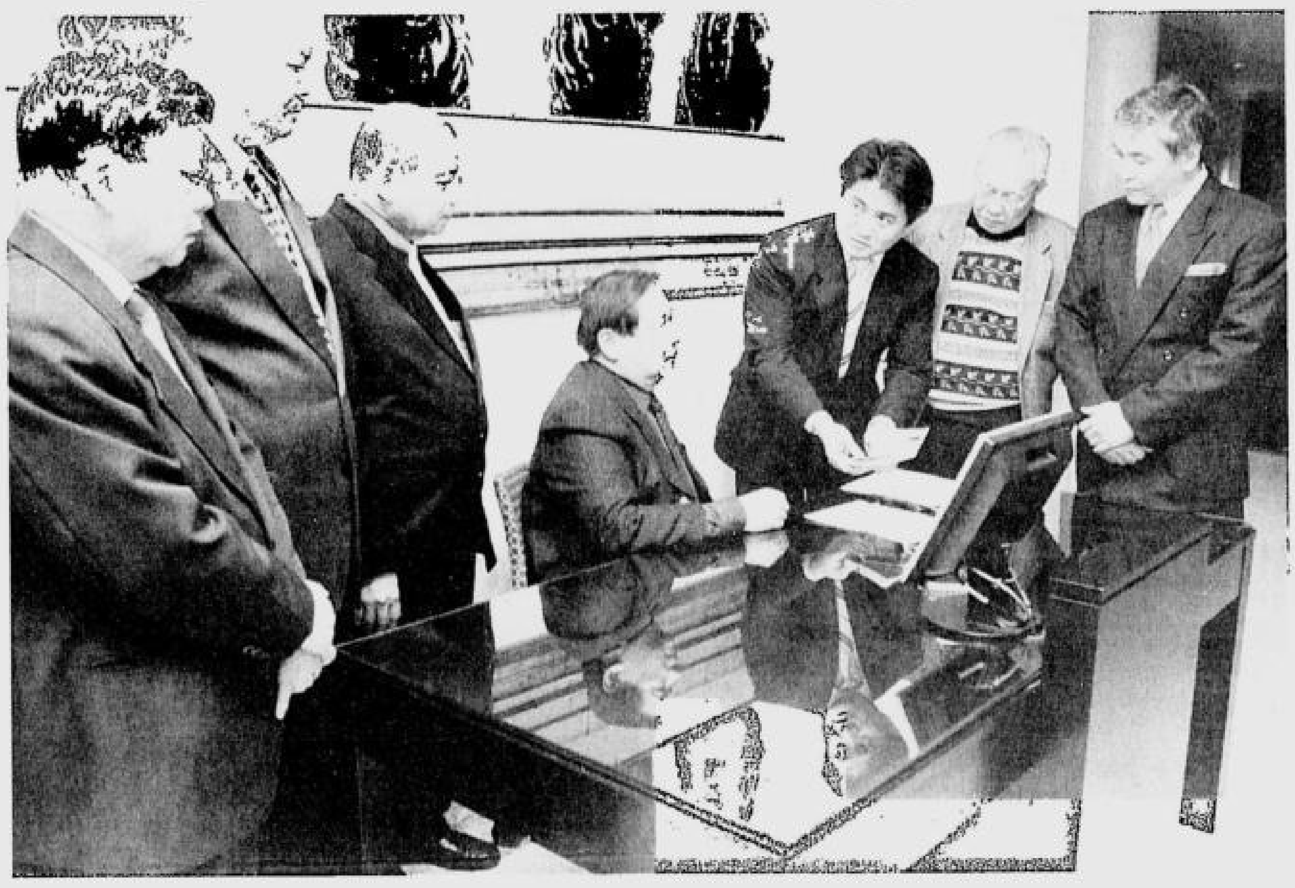
"That's part of our job. That's the risk we have to take. We might not be as lucky all the time," he said.

He also warned there was a "big possibility" that Utto and his group could be hired by politicians out to wreak havoc on their opponents in the coming May elections.

Police are still hunting down the three to five other members of the group who escaped during the police raid on the suspected terrorist hideout on the Laguna Lake island at dawn on Thursday.

"Our information is that they have high-powered firearms. We are concerned about what they can do with those guns in Metro Manila," Dolina said.

Dolina also reacted to a statement from MILF spokesperson Eid Kabalu denying that Utto and his men were MILF members. Kabalu said the separatist group has no units in Taytay, Rizal. *With Christine Avendaño*



FIRST GENTLEMAN Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo (center) signs a waiver allowing officials of the HypoVereinsbank in Munich, Germany to reveal his alleged accounts to members of the House ethics committee (from left) Rep. Rodante Marcoleta, Rep. Antonio Cerilles and Rep. Roberto Cajes. The Philippine Consul in Bonn, Germany, Edgar Auxilian, (third from right) authenticates Arroyo's signature. The First Gentleman was accompanied by his lawyers Jesus Santos (second from right) and Ruy Alberto Rondain.

JERRY CARUAL/PCPO

Mike A flies to Germany, signs waiver

By Michael Lim Ubac

FIRST GENTLEMAN JOSE MIGUEL ARROYO has signed a waiver in Munich allowing German banking authorities to disclose if he or any member of the First Family has deposits at Berische HypoVereins Bank as claimed by House Deputy Minority Leader Alan Peter Cayetano.

The INQUIRER yesterday tried but failed to obtain a copy of the waiver.

But pro-administration Reps. Exequiel Javier of Antique and Benasing Macarambon of Lanao del Sur confirmed that Mr. Arroyo, who joined a three-man congressional fact-finding team to Munich which left Monday, had indeed signed such a crucial document.

Mr. Arroyo presented the waiver to bank officials, "so they could freely discuss details of any and all bank accounts which he and other Arroyo family members may possess in the German bank based in Munich," said Macarambon.

Macarambon is a member of the House ethics committee which is hearing the complaint lodged by the First Family in September 2006 to expel Cayetano from the House of Representatives for "disorderly behavior" in connection with his exposé about the rumored German bank account.

The lawmaker claimed that by signing the waiver, Mr. Arroyo allayed concerns expressed by Makati Rep. Teodoro Locsin during plenary session Wednesday that the trip was useless since the German bank would only refuse to cooperate with the House fact-finding panel sans a bank waiver.

A waiver frees the bank from the restrictions imposed by the bank secrecy law-which bars the disclosure of any detail regarding a client's account or accounts and other investments with the bank to a third party.

In an interview, Cayetano welcomed the First Gentleman's move, but quickly asked whether the waiver was limited only to the Munich account.

"If it's truly a waiver, then he will have no problem in signing the waiver I have signed and have asked him to sign," said Cayetano.

He hoped that this time the First Gentleman was not bluffing.

"I hope the waiver will reveal the truth. I hope this time he will not cheat on the waiver or present a fake waiver," said the opposition lawmaker.

But Cayetano wondered why the First Gentleman had to go to Germany, saying, "Why spend millions of pesos to go to Germany instead of just signing the waiver here?"

He said he "remained steadfast" in his earlier commitment to voluntarily resign from the House if the First Family signed a waiver which would cover all its bank accounts and investments here and abroad.

He stressed that what he was trying to prove was not just the German account but whether there was a "pattern of corruption and money laundering of President Macapagal-Arroyo and some members of the First Family."

According to Javier and Macarambon, the First Gentleman had even pledged to sign a full waiver for Philippine monetary authorities to examine his bank accounts here and abroad, if HypoVereins Bank officials confirmed there was truth to Cayetano's allegations.

Javier said the First Gentleman's willingness to sign a waiver showed that he had nothing to hide.

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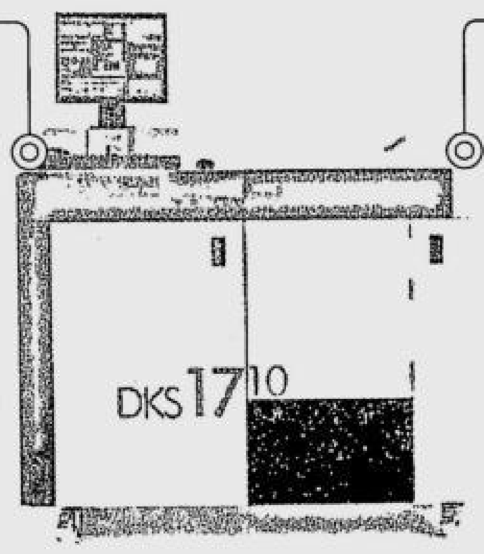

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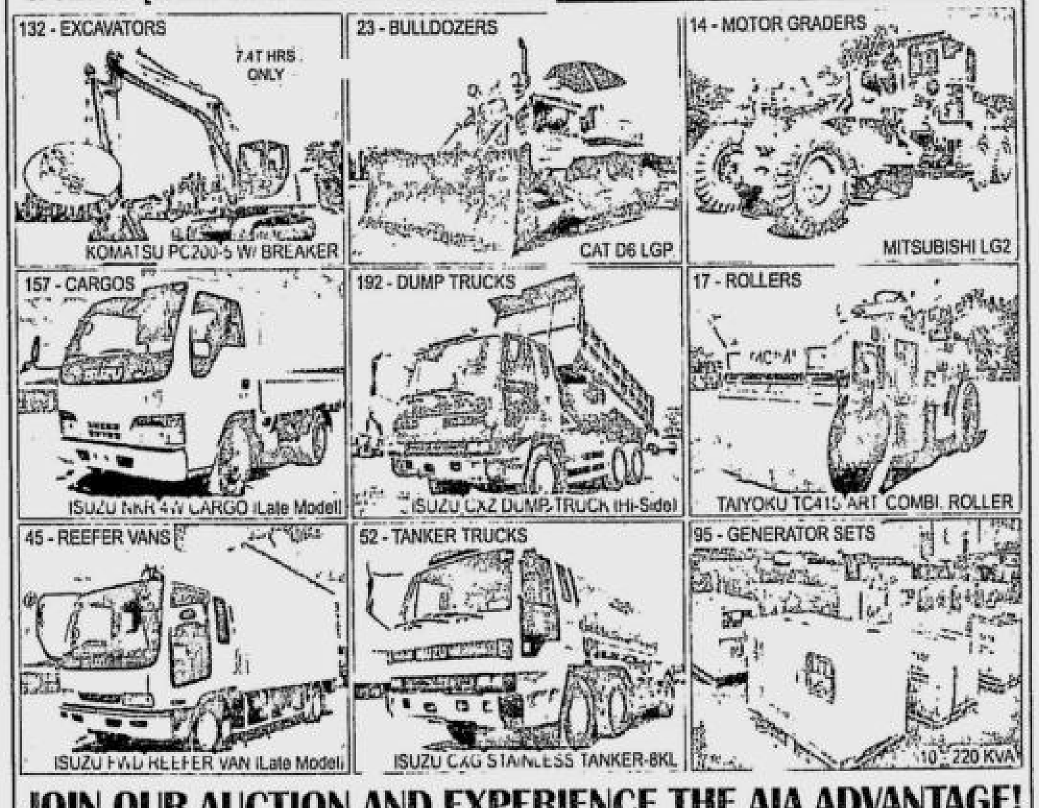

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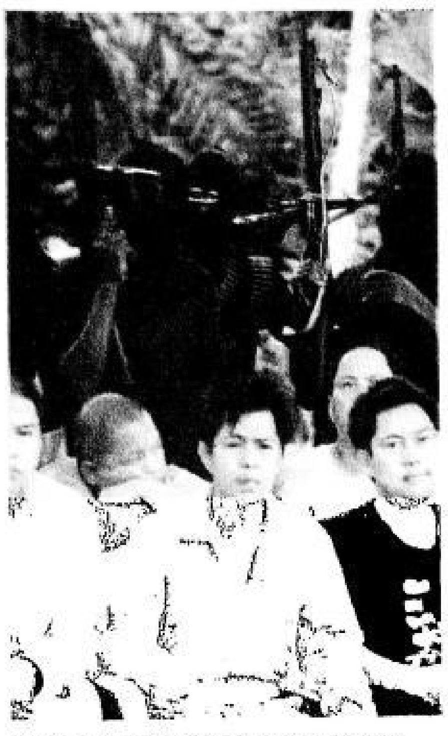


FIVE of the 24 Filipino hostages are guarded by Nigerian captors at an undisclosed location at the Niger Delta on Wednesday. REUTERS

DFA finds Nigeria photos disturbing

By Volt Contreras

THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFfairs was clearly disturbed by the first-ever media photos of the Filipino seafarers held hostage in Nigeria since Jan. 20 as ongoing negotiations passed its second critical week.

The chilling photos that saw print in Manila on Friday, which showed five of the 24 Filipino captives guarded by armed and hooded gunmen, highlighted the 13-day-old crisis that has yet to see a breakthrough in negotiations for their release.

The photos came just a day before a Nigerian oil worker abducted Tuesday from an oil facility in troubled southern Nigeria was found dead. There has been a dramatic upsurge in violence traced to separatist groups or armed gangs in southern Nigeria's oil-producing Niger Delta since the start of 2006.

The Filipino hostages were seized aboard the Nigerian-flagged, German-owned cargo ship Baco Liner II off the coast of the West African state by gunmen allegedly belonging to the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta.

In a press briefing, DFA officials reported that they were coordinating closely with Nigerian government negotiators and reiterated their optimism about the Filipinos' well-being and eventual release.

But Esteban Conejos, DFA Undersecretary for Migrant Workers Affairs, said he preferred not to speculate on the motives of the abductors in apparently allowing photos to be taken of their Filipino captives and having these circulated worldwide. The published photos were sourced from Reuters.

Earlier in the day, a party led by Nigerian Charge d'Affaires Sam Azubuike Dada Olisa was summoned by the DFA to a meeting with Conejos. DFA spokesperson Ed Malaya said the meeting was called to ensure closer coordination between the Philippines and Nigeria on the hostage crisis.

On Thursday, the DFA admitted that negotiators were having difficulties with the abductors' "political demands."

The rebels are reportedly demanding the release of two prisoners held by the Nigerian government on charges of treason.

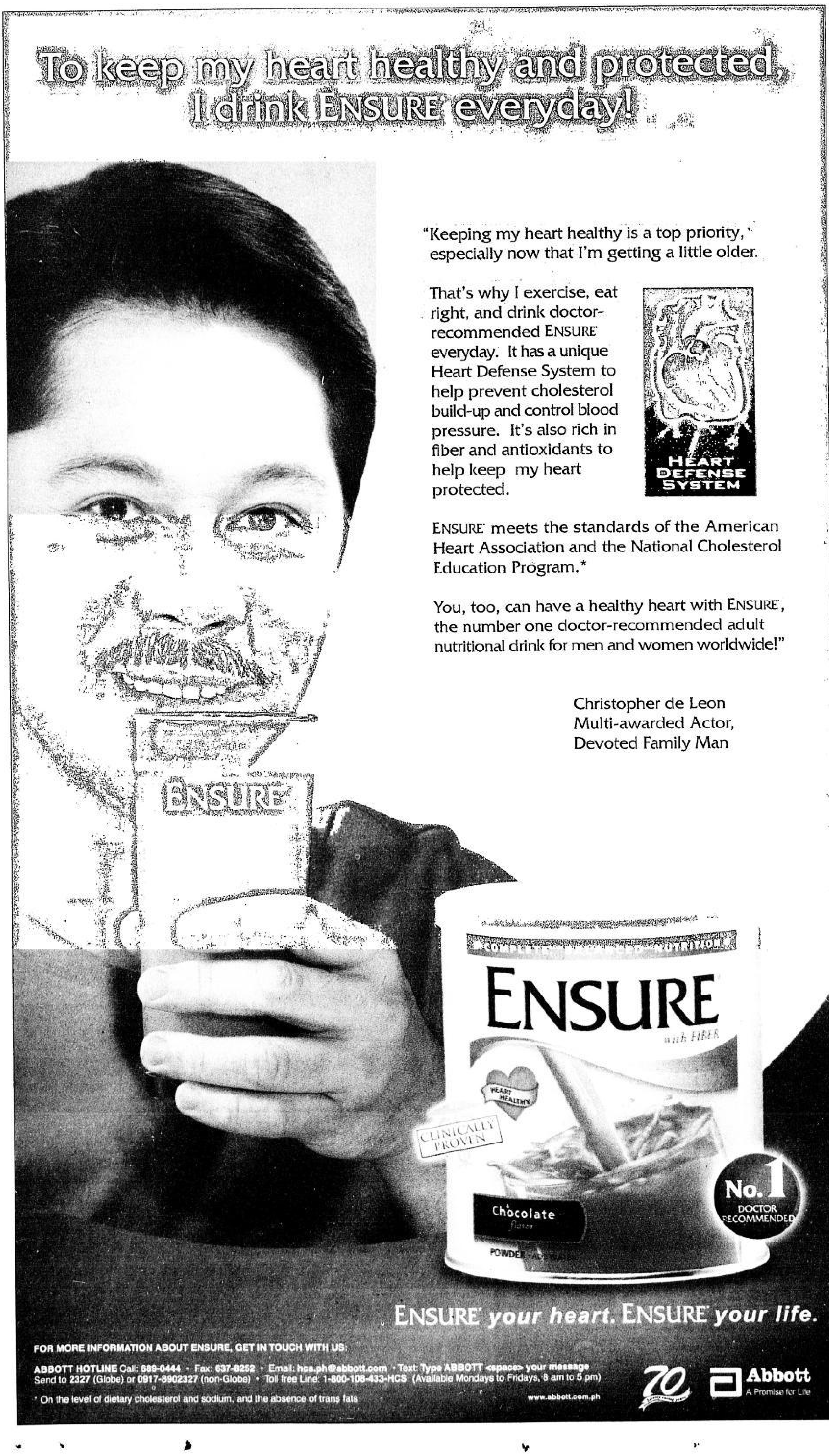
Conejos reported that based on updates from the country's ambassador to Nigeria, Masaranga Umpa, "talks (with the abductors) are ongoing as we speak, but you would agree with me that I cannot disclose the details because of the nature of these talks."

The official clarified that the Philippine Embassy was "not directly involved" in the negotiations, which has been between the Nigerian government and the abductors in Warri, Niger Delta.

The shipping company employing the Filipinos was also not involved in the talks, Conejos added.

Six out of 10 embassy personnel, led by Umpa, have stationed themselves in a hotel in Warri to monitor the talks and play "the role of coordinator," he said.

With AFP



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Atong says gov't stands to gain a lot from plea bargain

By Norman Bordadora

THE GOVERNMENT STANDS TO gain much more from the plea bargain that state prosecutors concluded with him, Charlie "Atong" Ang told the Sandiganbayan anti-graft court.

Apart from the savings in time and expense that it would take to prove Ang's guilt, the government stands to gain a witness in some of the cases it is prosecuting and P25 million in surrendered funds, Ang's lawyers argued in a memorandum to the court in support of the deal.

Ang, a coaccused in the plunder case against deposed President Joseph Estrada, negotiated a plea bargain with state prosecutors that would have him plead guilty to the lesser offense of corrupting a public official, which is punishable by a maximum of six years in prison.

If convicted of plunder, Ang would have to spend the rest of his life in prison.

In exchange, Ang will testify in government cases of which he has personal knowledge and pay P25 million as reparation. The amount represents what prosecutors said he took from the P130 million in tobacco excise taxes that were allegedly diverted by Estrada.

His lawyers said Ang was willing to testify for the government despite the implications for his own safety and that of his family.

"This he is willing to do even if he and his family would forever suffer the fear of reprisal," lawyers Alfredo Villamor and Ruth Castelo said.

Ang's lawyers described the plea bargain with the prosecution as "unprecedented."

Ang's assistance may just prove to be invaluable and significant in the successful prosecution of the cases, they said.

To pay the P25 million,, the lawyers said Ang was offering his Corinthian Gardens family home that he and his family occupied for many years and which he acquired long before he became a buddy of the disgraced ex-President, the lawyers said.

The lawyers disagreed with the Sandiganbayan justices who questioned the plea bargain, saying that Ang was offering to plead guilty to the wrong crime, that is, of corrupting a public official which they said was not even included in the charges. The justices said that Ang did not give Estrada the bribe but merely delivered the P130 million. They suggested Ang plead guilty instead to being an accessory to plunder.

The defense lawyers argued that in order to determine whether or not the lesser offense, bribery, to which Ang proposes to plead guilty was within the crime charged, it would have to be established on the basis of the charges contained in the information.

Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio, who signed the plea bargain deal for the government, said it was already corruption on the part of Ang to give Estrada the funds even it was not his own.

"It's even worse because it's the people's money," Villa-Ignacio said.

Biazon welcomes actors as senators

By TJ Burgonio

A MORE STAR-STUDDED Senate? Why not, says Sen. Rodolfo Biazon.

Ideally, Biazon said, the Senate has to be represented by all sectors of society, including show biz folks, so it can take into consideration all views in its hearings and floor debates, and craft a good piece of legislation.

"I think a legislature must possess all the possible human experience to be brought into the chamber. Meaning, we should have a doctor here, a lawyer here, a soldier here, a policeman here, etc.," Biazon, a former Marine and Armed Forces chief, said in a briefing.

"These differing human experiences in life must be brought into the crafting of proposed laws because we are legislating everything of interest in the life of our society. That's why, we should not impose prohibitions on anybody."

Biazon, chair of Senate defense committee, said that anybody could aspire for a seat in the Senate so long as he or she has the basic qualifications. "Anybody but anybody can come in, provided of course, they have the qualifications," he said.

Actors Richard Gomez, Edu Manzano and Cesar Montano, among others, have announced plans to run for the Senate. But they face the usual skepticism that they lacked the competence necessary to grasp the complex process of legislation.

Gomez, Manzano and Montano are reportedly running under the administration ticket.

If they win, they will be joining action stars Lito Lapid Jr., Ramon "Bong" Revilla Jr. and Jinggoy Estrada, who won in the 2004 senatorial elections.

Former Senate President Ernesto Maceda, spokesperson of the United Opposition, had remarked on national TV that it would be prudent for the populace not to elect show biz personalities into the Senate now because of the dismal performance of actors in the upper chamber.

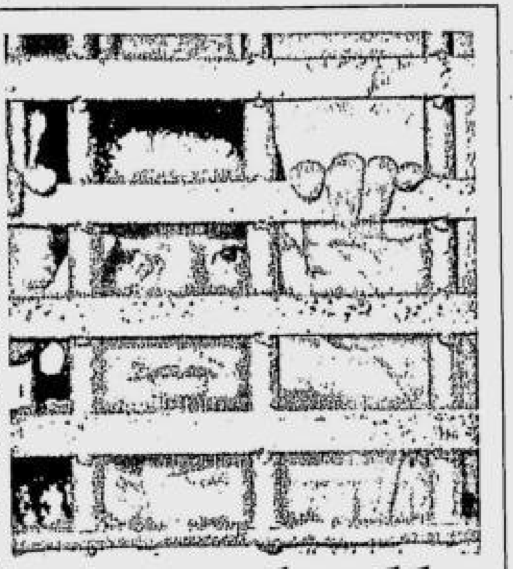
But Revilla scoffed at the remark but didn't feel slighted because he knew how much he has accomplished for the past three years, but admitted he could not speak yet of a "sterling record in the field of crafting laws."

He said he had filed six local bills on road conversion that were eventually approved as well as other measures seeking a stop to pornography and gender-discrimination, and the lowering of the amusement tax which are the subject of debates on the floor.

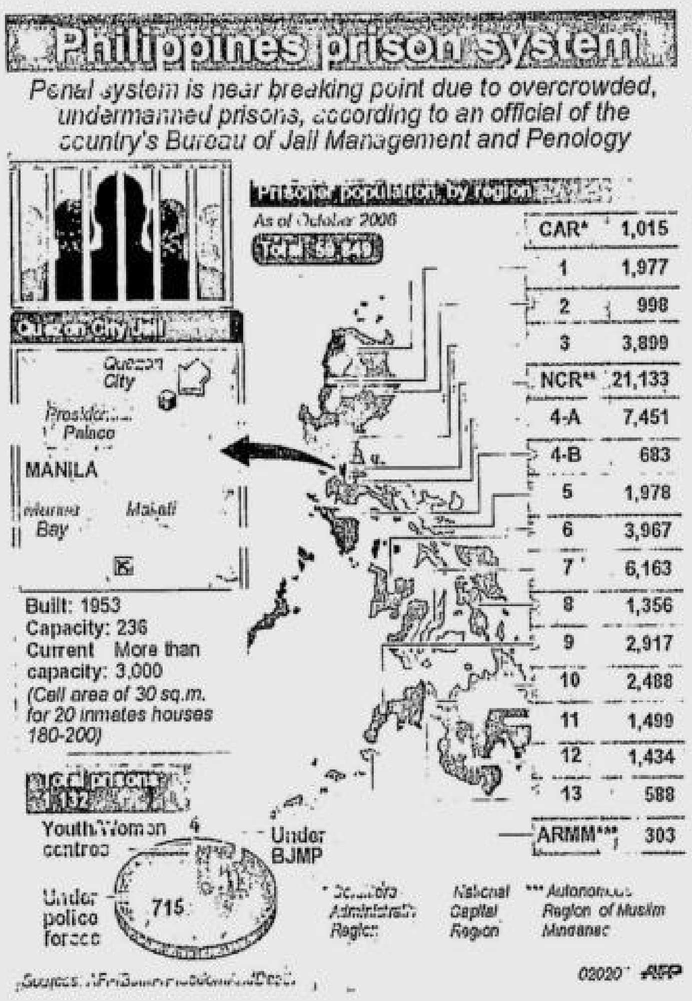
What was important, Revilla pointed out, was that he had never been accused of corruption. "I have never been accused of using my position to further my personal gain," he said.

REDEMPTION for Raymund Narag (at left) who is now a Fulbright scholar in the US after languishing for seven years inside the Quezon City jail. Bleak prospects for NPA guerrilla Juanito Itaas (at right) who has spent 18 years in Muntinlupa for killing US military adviser Colonel James Rowe. The US strongly opposes parole or pardon for Itaas.

AFP PHOTO/ROMEO GACAD



RP prison system a living hell



Philippines prison system
Penal system is near breaking point due to overcrowded, undermanned prisons, according to an official of the country's Bureau of Jail Management and Penology
Quezon City Jail
Quezon City
Presidential Palace
MANILA
Manila Bay
Makati
Built: 1953
Capacity: 236
Current capacity: More than 3,000
(Cell area of 30 sq.m. for 20 inmates houses 180-200)
Youth/Women centres 4
Under BJMP
Under police forces 715
Prisoner population, by region
As of October 2006
Total: 59,849
CAR* 1,015
1 1,977
2 998
3 3,899
NCR** 21,133
4-A 7,451
4-B 683
5 1,978
6 3,967
7 6,163
8 1,356
9 2,917
10 2,488
11 1,499
12 1,434
13 588
ARMM*** 303
* Cordillera Administrative Region
** National Capital Region
*** Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao
AFP

RAYMUND NARAG SPENT NEARLY SEVEN years in Quezon City jail for a crime he did not commit.

Three years after he was released from his living hell he published a book about his experience called "Freedom and Death: Inside the Jail." Published in 2005, it painted a harrowing picture of a prison system more in tune with the 19th century than the modern age.

Narag, 33, was about to graduate with honors from the University of the Philippines in 1995 when he was accused of taking part in a fraternity rumble that resulted in the death of another student. After spending almost seven years in jail, he was acquitted and released from detention in 2002.

After the horror of his situation had sunk in, Narag decided he would use his time in jail productively. He organized and taught functional literacy classes for the inmates. He came up with projects to improve the lives of the prisoners. He also enrolled in the UP Open University program.

Upon his release, Narag decided he would make his career in the field of criminal justice. He took every opportunity to speak on the plight of people behind bars. The then Supreme Court Justice Hilario Davide took him in as a consultant on penal affairs. In 2005, the Supreme Court published his book.

A cultural attache at the United States Embassy who heard of Narag's story recommended him for a Fulbright scholarship. He is now in the Michigan State University working on his master's in criminal justice.

In his book, Narag laid out in graphic detail the subhuman existence inmates were forced to endure: the stench, the overcrowding, the toilets that ran like rivers through the cells, disease and death.

Built in the 1950s, the Quezon City jail was only supposed to house 236 inmates. Today it is home to more than 3,000 packed in so tight that many inmates sleep standing up.

It is a scene repeated around the country in a prison system grossly undermanned, poorly funded and neglected by the country's economic planners.

According to Chief Superintendent Antonio Cruz, head of the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology and the largest cog in a fragmented penal service, the system is near to breaking point.

"Overcrowding is our most pressing problem," he said.

Cruz's bureau, which is an arm of the interior department, runs 1,100 prisons with a total cell area of just over 56,000 square meters and a population at the end of 2006 of more than 60,000 inmates.

Most are awaiting trial while a small percentage are serving sentences for minor crimes like theft and illegal drug use.

Another 200 prisons are run by the police forces of smaller provincial towns as Cruz's bureau with just 7,000 personnel, cannot cope. Ideally, he said, the system needs another 35,000 guards and support staff.

"The situation is not ideal," said Director General Avelino Razon, deputy chief for administration of the Philippine National Police.

"This takes up a big complement of men and women from their principal police duties," he said.

About 17,000 other inmates convicted of more serious crimes like murder, kidnapping and drug dealing are housed in slightly better facilities at the National Penitentiary compound in Muntinlupa City.

The UN Standard of the Minimum Treatment of Prisoners, to which the Philippine government is a signatory, gives clear guidelines on how prisoners should be treated, including bedding and food, and states: "It is not desirable to have two prisoners in a cell or room."

In Quezon City jail a 30-square-meter cell with a holding capacity for 20 houses 180 to 200 inmates.

Nearly a thousand Death Row inmates contributed to the overcrowding at the maximum security section of the National Penitentiary after Congress abolished the death penalty last year.

"Conditions are a bit better here," says inmate Rodolfo Fernandez.

"Back at the provincial jail there would be 100 of us in a cell built for 40. Even the spaces beneath the beds were occupied."

Fernandez was jailed for life for swindling neighbors seeking work abroad of their life savings.

Still, of the 185 inmates at his new quarters, only 80 have beds while 105 use their own mats to sleep on the floor.

Policing packed jails with a handful of men is "very difficult," Cruz said.

The rotting jail facilities themselves "become a rich source for improvising deadly weapons" such as rusted iron bars.

He said the bureau "has no jail facility for high-risk inmates nor maximum security cells".

The US State Department, in a human rights report on the Philippines two years ago, said the country's prison conditions were "rudimentary and sometimes harsh," were "overcrowded, lacked basic infrastructure, and provided prisoners with an inadequate diet."

It said the "slow judicial process exacerbated the problem of overcrowding. Some inmates took turns sleeping, and others slept on their feet".

The study also cited "widespread corruption" among guards as well as "reports that guards abused prisoners," including women who were "particularly vulnerable to sexual and physical assault by police and prison guards".

Cruz admits congestion exposes inmates to "diseases, contamination," and warns the problem will probably get worse before it gets better. But he denies prisoners are physically or sexually abused.

He estimates the prison population will rise by about 13 percent a year over the next eight years mainly due to case overload within the undermanned judicial system, as well as higher bail bonds imposed on drugs offenders who make up 60 percent of the national prison population.

The Manila-based Australian business consultant Peter Wallace said recently there are about a million cases pending for 1,470 judges across the country because a third of the country's courts are without a judge.

"For a salary of P20,000, there's little question as to why that's so," he said. Less than one percent of the national budget goes to the judiciary.

With an annual budget of just P2.8 billion, "we don't have enough financial support to construct new jails," Cruz said.

Realistically, he added, under these conditions, rehabilitation—the fundamental objective of the penal system—just does not take place.

"You just go back and forth in the system, committing the same offense. *AFP*

Silliman U wins CHEd best research award

SILLIMAN UNIVERSITY IN DUMAGUETE City won last week the Commission on Higher Education's P1-million award for best research program.

Silliman bested 11 other regional winning entries for the Best Higher Education Institutions (HEI) Research Program in the country with its pioneering study on marine protected areas, it was announced at awarding ceremonies held at the Philippine International Convention Center.

University of the Philippines-Diliman placed second in the national awards for its entry, "Application of Nuclear Techniques to Address Specified Red Tide."

Mariano Marcos State University placed third for its entry, "Integrated Kawayan R&D Program of the Ilocos Region." The second and third placers received P500,000 and P300,000, respectively.

In his opening remarks, CHED Chairman Dr. Carlito Puno emphasized the crucial role of research in national development. All 12 research finalists were winners in a regional search.

Their "Marine Laboratory Program on Marine Protected Areas" details over three decades of research and extension work by the SU Marine Laboratory, now Institute of Environment and Marine Sciences (IEMS), on fishery enhancement and biodiversity conservation in the Visayas and Mindanao. It has led to the establishment of some 20 marine protected areas (MPAs) and provided assistance to 61 other areas, said Dr. Angel Alcala, SU Research Director and former Silliman President and Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

"This award is a result of consistent, quality research being undertaken by SU focusing on one critical component of our people's development, and this is our coasts and their resources," Silliman President Dr. Ben Malayang III said.

MPA Program Leader and SU IEMS Director Dr. Hilconida Calumpong said they would use the monetary award to expand their research and further promote the management of the country's coastal resources.

The national winners were determined by the five-member 2006 National Evaluation Committee headed by Dr. Emil Javier, President of the National Academy of Science and Technology and National Chair, AGHAM. The other members included Dr. Saturnino Ocampo Jr, CHED Commissioner, Dr. Filemon A. Uriarte Jr., Academician, National Academy of Science and Technology, Dr. Furtunato de la Pena, Undersecretary for Science and Technology Services of the Department of Science and Technology, and Dr. Mario Lamberte, Micro Finance Manager, EMERGE, USAID.

Correction

IN THE FEB. 2 ISSUE, a front-page story—"Khalifa held office with Libyan in Malate"—misstated the year Ramzi Yousef allegedly plotted to kill then Pope John Paul II. Yousef plotted to kill the Pope in 1995—not 1982.

* * *

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors in writing to the Day Desk, Philippine Daily Inquirer, PDI Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Mascardo Street, Makati City, fax Nos. 897-47-93/94; e-mail address: daydesk@inquirer.com.ph.

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DOJ upgrades case vs Leviste to murder

From page A1

Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay hours after the shooting and claimed self-defense.

Manuel Singson, his lawyer, yesterday decried the "indecent haste" with which the reinvestigation of the case was concluded.

Singson pointed out that the reinvestigation started on Jan. 31 at 2 p.m. and the resolution against his client was filed yesterday morning, or less than two days later.

The resolution was also filed a day after Leviste's camp asked the Court of Appeals to stop the reinvestigation and the Makati RTC not to act on whatever Velasco would recommend.

"As a lawyer, I'm not only disappointed at the conduct of prosecutor Velasco but [also] ashamed at the way he's conducting the proceedings," Singson said.

He called on the Court of Appeals to act promptly on his client's petition to stop the "rank injustice."

If he were armed...

In finding Leviste liable for murder, Velasco said the ex-governor's claim of self-defense did not stand.

Velasco said that if it were true that De las Alas was armed, he would have engaged Leviste in a gunfight instead of just shielding his face, as shown by a gunshot wound on his left arm.

And even if De las Alas had a gun, Leviste could just have shot him to incapacitate him instead of repeatedly shooting his face and head, the prosecutor said in his resolution.

"There is no proof whatsoever that prior to the time that Leviste shot De las Alas, there was a previous unlawful and unprovoked attack that placed Leviste's life in danger and forced him to shoot the victim," Velasco said, adding:

"The killing of De las Alas was therefore not simply a case of homicide but of murder because of the presence of several qualifying circumstances."

But Singson said: "It's quite obvious that ... prosecutor Velasco has acted with indecent haste with no other intention but to preempt the Court of Appeals from acting on our petition.

Charade, farce

"He has not only committed an act of judicial discourtesy but [also] made a mockery of our judicial system."

According to Singson, Makati Judge Elmo Alameda initially gave Velasco 15 days to reinvestigate the case but the latter asked for 30 days.

Singson said Velasco's recommendation had confirmed his earlier contention that the reinvestigation was "a charade and a farce" because its conclusion was arrived at before it even began.

He also contested Velasco's findings of murder and conspiracy, saying that if Leviste had planned to kill De las Alas, the ex-governor would not have invited the latter to his office.

"If you planned on killing someone, would you do it in your own office?" he said.

Singson also said the finding that Leviste had not acted alone was "ridiculous."

"[The resolution] is all based on speculations, conjectures and surmises and suppositions," he said.

Elements of murder

Velasco said premeditation was evident in the statement of Nelia Gonzales that Leviste and De las Alas were arguing on Jan. 11, the day before the killing.

Per Gonzales' account, De las Alas was demanding from Leviste P1 million in commission from the sale of a piece of real estate but that the two men failed to settle the issue.

The next day, Leviste supposedly asked De las Alas to see him again, and they continued arguing until the latter was shot.

As for treachery, Velasco said De las Alas was shot while seated and not in a fighting stance, indicating that his shooting was "sudden and unexpected."

"The manner in which De las Alas was shot in the face and head did not give him the opportunity to defend himself anymore or even to retaliate. Such manner [was] deliberately and consciously adopted by Leviste without any danger to his person," Velasco said, adding that De las Alas need not have his back turned to the shooter to indicate treachery.

De las Alas was also killed with cruelty, as shown by additional gunshot wounds that need not have been inflicted, according to Velasco.

"The gunshot wounds on the face of De las Alas were not necessary to kill him. The range and manner with which those wounds were inflicted showed deliberateness on the part of Leviste," the prosecutor said.

With regard to the crime scene, Velasco said it was evident that De las Alas' body, found slumped on a chair, was moved before police arrived.

Describing the position of the gun in De las Alas' right hand, he said the trigger finger was not inside the trigger housing and the gun was loosely held between the right thumb and forefinger.

"The gun was even awkwardly pointed at the belly of De las Alas, as if he was about to shoot himself," Velasco said.

He said fresh scratch marks on the chair had been caused by the rubbing of the gun's hammer against it, indicating that the gun was placed in De las Alas' hand after his death.

Velasco also said De las Alas' forefinger could not be bent and put inside the trigger housing because rigor mortis had set in.

"It bears to stress here that police came to know about the shooting only after more than an hour after the incident," he said.

It was also found that De las Alas was shot at close range, as shown by the gunpowder residue in the face and head wounds and the blood on the nozzle of Leviste's gun, the prosecutor said.

According to Velasco, the body had five gunshot wounds—two on the face, one at the top of the head, one at the back of the head, and another on the left forearm.

Four cartridge casings were found to be from Leviste's .380 revolver. Three deformed slugs were also found, but Velasco said it could not be determined whether these were fired from the .380.

Blood on the face

Velasco also said De las Alas was found on the chair with the head leaning on the left and an exit wound below the right ear.

But the blood from the exit wound trailed across the face, he said, adding:

"The explanation here was that De las Alas' head was previously slumped downward, explaining the gravitational path of the blood toward the center of his face."

Velasco said the manner of the killing, the number of gunshot wounds and their location, and the recovered bullet slugs showed that Leviste did not act alone and had co-conspirators.

He ordered the police and the National Bureau of Investigation to determine their identities.

Image ...

From page A1

But even the master spin doctor was stumped when asked how President Macapagal-Arroyo should have handled the "Hello Garci" scandal wherein the country's highest official was caught on tape talking to Commission on Elections Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano in the middle of the canvassing of the 2004 elections.

"I am humbled by not being able to give advice on this. That one really baffled me," said Abunda who has been tapped by Presidential Chief of Staff Michael Defensor to assume a key role in his run for a Senate seat in May.

Bare all

Abunda said he could not even compare the "Hello Garci" scandal to one of the incidents he masterfully handled three years ago—the shocking breakup of TV host Kris Aquino and comedian Joey Marquez where the presidential daughter admitted on prime time news that she was battered, abused and stricken with STD (sexually transmitted disease) by the middle-aged actor and former Parañaque mayor.

"It's not the same situation because it (Aquino's case) was not a malfeasance. Kris could have ended her career, but she was the only one involved, not the entire nation," said Abunda, who advised Aquino to bare it all to the public.

He said he has encouraged his talents to tell the truth in any situation because the public does not go for celebrities who claim they are "flawless."

"Movie stars are less vulnerable to controversies that normally kill us mortals like unwanted pregnancies and breakups. If they continue to do well in their career, the public will still adore them," he added.

Still, Abunda said his experience in building and saving the careers of celebrities would serve him well.

"I think politics and show biz are in the same neighborhood—both give me the creative calisthenics that I crave," he told the INQUIRER in a phone interview.

He said his decision to accept clients in politics was a natural progression for him. "I've always been interested in politics, [but I've always been] a bystander ... at the periphery. I actually have more books on politics than show business," said Abunda, who is currently reading former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's book "The Mighty and the Almighty."

He had his first brush with politics back in 1984 when he was one of the consultants tapped by Helen Benitez in her successful bid for Cavite's seat at the Batasang Pambansa.

But it was not until a few years ago that he spread his wings in the political field when he helped Mar Roxas top the Senate race in 2004.

Abunda stressed that his role in Defensor's campaign would be substantial but "it's very difficult to define what I'm going to do for Mike. I do everything right now as a friend. I am the image handler. I am helping him define a package."

He said that most politicians look for the X-factor or that mass appeal that makes a superstar stand out from the rest of the pack.

"Charisma cannot be bought or manufactured. We have to get it out of the person himself," Abunda said. "There will always be people who like you and those who don't like you. Our goal is how to manage the latter and we do this through visibility and acceptability."

Vote for a friend

In Defensor's case, Abunda said his strategy was not to cover his flaws but highlight his strengths. "We will not engage in political debates of administration versus opposition because that is polarizing; he will be a friend to the voters, someone who does not abandon a friend in time of need," he said, alluding to Defensor's "Tol" campaign.

While he had no advice for the "Hello Garci" scandal, Abunda did have one suggestion for the President.

"I will not give her a makeover. I don't think you can change the President. She's not a smiling President; she's a hardworking president. But I will advise her to stop pleasing the market and just do her job," he said.

Loren's Senate run may end protest case vs Noli

From page A1

at all, this would become moot once she assumes a seat in the chamber if she wins.

"There's no law that states that a candidate will forfeit the protest upon filing of certificate of candidacy," she said, quoting her election lawyer, Sixto Brillantes.

"It's possibly going to be moot when I assume my seat. However, it's really up to the lawyers of the opponent to file a petition for dismissal, and up to my lawyers to counter the petition for dismissal. And up to the high court to decide."

Moot and academic

Macalintal, who also appears before the Presidential Electoral Tribunal (PET), said he would file a motion to dismiss the protest before the PET the moment Legarda filed her COC.

He cited a Supreme Court resolution in PET Case 001 involving Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago, then a presidential candidate, and President Fidel Ramos, who won the 1992 presidential election.

Macalintal said the PET resolution, which was issued on Feb. 13, 1996, or less than a year after Santiago's victory in the May 8, 1995, senatorial elections, considered the protest moot and academic when Santiago filed her COC for senator.

The PET resolution on Santiago v. Ramos reads: "It has been rendered moot and academic by its abandonment or withdrawal by the protestant as a consequence of her election and assumption of office as senator and her discharge of the duties and functions thereof."

Key is assumption

But Brillantes insisted that the mere filing of the COC and campaigning for the senatorial elections were not the main grounds for the dismissal of the Santiago protest but her assumption as senator.

"The filing of the COC alone is not the sole basis because there's nothing to abandon yet. The key word is assumption," he said.

Brillantes said that under the law, a winning candidate assumes his/her new elective position on June 30, 2007, and has 30 days to assume it.

He said that even if Legarda won in the elections, she still had to decide whether to assume her post as senator within 30 days from June 30 or pursue her protest, which involves a higher office.

Same case

Macalintal said that even without the Santiago doctrine, Legarda would abandon her protest because she was aspiring for a new elective position.

He also said that Legarda's case was no different from Santiago's.

"I don't see any difference. I don't believe she (Legarda) still has to choose which position. She's intelligent enough to choose. Of course, she will choose the senatorial post," Macalintal said.

"But she should be honest enough to specifically and categorically admit that she would choose the senatorial position instead of pursuing her election protest," he added.

Topping surveys

Legarda, who has been topping surveys and had been drafted No. 1 by the United Opposition-led coalition for the May 14 senatorial elections, said she would formally announce her candidacy after attending the next two hearings of her case on Feb. 5 and 9.

"*Gusto ko buo na ang loob ko* (I want to be very sure)," she said when asked why she was deferring her announcement until those dates. She said she had not declared her candidacy until now because she was still trying "to reclaim my rightful seat as Vice President."

Legarda filed the case against De Castro, claiming she had been cheated in the vice presidential race three years ago and has doggedly pursued this before the Supreme Court, which sits as the Presidential Electoral Tribunal.

She ran with the late actor, Fernando Poe Jr., under the opposition coalition in the May 2004 presidential elections, and both lost. Poe died in December 2004 before his election protest was tackled by the PET.

She parlayed her popularity as TV broadcaster into electoral victory in the 1998 senatorial elections, and served for the next six years, rising to become the majority leader from 2000 to 2004 when she was drafted as Poe's running mate.

Legarda said she was elated by her inclusion in the UNO-led coalition slate and indicated that she would likely run with the opposition.

"I'd like to state that I welcome and appreciate the draft and invitation of the United Opposition or UNO into their senatorial slate. In the next few days, I will announce my formal decision," she said in the Senate forum.

Good fight for 3 years

"I'm independent, and I will also assess and possibly, announce by next week if I'm joining a party, and which party I will join. But of course, this will be in the opposition."

The former senator said she doesn't expect her protest case to be resolved within the next two to three years, but she wouldn't mind if this was dismissed on account of her decision to run because after all she had "fought a good fight for truth and justice."

"I had protested more than 100,000 precincts. There are 240,000 precincts in the country, I spent more than P12 million in a span of three years, and they only finished one province, Lanao del Sur," she said, referring to her claims that election returns across the country had been replaced with fake ones in the cheating that marred the 2004 vote.

"Whether or not it will be dismissed by the court on account of my possible running for the Senate, it's enough that I fought a good fight for the past three years."

Families of achieving students use 5 strategies

From page A1

read. As for computers, they mainly go to Internet cafés to do research. Most of them watch TV, but only after they finish homework, and usually only for a limited time (one to two hours daily).

The majority of the families of achievers are close-knit. The parents are the primary caregivers of the children.

In the survey, many parents revealed that despite financial worries, they had managed to prioritize and make time for their children.

In return, most of the children often assist in household chores, and also help their family earn extra income. But studies come first.

Most parents understand the importance of studies, and excuse their children from household tasks come exam time or when there is a lot of homework.

Family bonds are strengthened through regular activities (which need not be expensive), such as cooking meals together, playing scrabble, or celebrating at a local fast-food chain.

The parents know their children's friends, and make sure that their kids are not influenced by undesirable *barkada* (gang mates).

Encouraging learning

A home that encourages learning is what Lincoln and Elizabeth Leyretana provide for their children.

Lincoln bought books and read to his children when they were 2 years old. Instead of hanging picture frames on the walls, he posted educational charts of animals and plants to whet the kids' curiosity.

The parents try to answer their children's questions as best they can, and also check homework regularly.

Lincoln works as a tricycle driver; Elizabeth is an entrepreneur. Every day the children observe their parents' hardship and struggle to give them the best care. Thus, they strive hard to excel.

For instance, Eliza Marie, the eldest, loves school and never cuts classes "*kahit walang baon* (even with no allowance)."

Simple pleasures

To make up for the constant lack of resources, Lincoln and Elizabeth give the children all the food they can afford at home: *"Ang balik namin sa kanila ay ang ibigay lahat nang maihahandang pagkain."* The children appreciate this; Eliza eats while doing homework.

With a simple life come simple pleasures. When she does well at the Dr. Felipe de Jesus Memorial School in Plaridel, Bulacan, Eliza Marie would request, not toys or clothes, but a family visit to their grandparents in Rizal.

The family members also enjoy one another's company. They listen to the radio, watch a movie on TV, or sing together.

Lincoln also believes that "parents should behave like parents" and know how to discipline their children.

For example, if there is an affair that the children want to attend, Lincoln tells them to make the request ahead of time. He allows his children to entertain visitors in their house, but with a time limit, knowing that when they stay up too late, they cannot focus properly in class the next day.

All in the family

The family's goal is to have the children go to college on full scholarships. With a supportive home environment, the children will most likely succeed in doing so.

My student Francis Alcausin graduated from Marikina Science High School as one of the top students in his batch.

He will graduate with a degree in mathematics from the Ateneo de Manila University next month. His siblings—all scholars—are in college or in high school.

His mother Liberty emphasizes that parents need to know their priorities. Family is at the top of her list.

When she was offered a tutorial job, she turned it down: "Why should I teach other children when I have my own to teach?"

When presented with the option of working abroad as a domestic helper, she asked herself: "Why take care of other people and leave my own family to be cared for by others?"

When the elder children were in grade school, dinnertime and Sunday Mass were sacred bonding times. Eliseo and Liberty Alcausin used to take their brood out to eat, but stopped because of budget constraints. Still, a strong bond has been formed because of the regular *kuwentuhan* (story-telling) that the parents encourage among and with their children.

Liberty knows what happens in school, who the children's friends are, and who among the teachers they respect most. She believes it is important to be aware of the people and other influences that affect them.

Her children confide in her as they do in their friends, but they also respect her authority.

Good news

News about education in our country is mostly dismal—low test scores, inadequate classrooms, brain drain of teachers.

But there is good news. Despite poverty and lack of resources, many public school families have managed to help their children do well in school, thus securing for themselves a better future.

Children whose parents provide a fertile learning environment at home do better in school. They are motivated and confident, and believe that they can achieve as long as they work hard.

My student Von Sinence, the valedictorian of Parang High School in Marikina City who topped my math class last year, says:

"What drives me to put my best foot forward is having a purpose in life. I became a consistent honors student not so much for myself as for my family.

"I love to see the smiles on the faces of members of my family. I want to fulfill their expectations—that I become their future breadwinner.

"I want to use my capabilities to help other people. Right now, I am giving back to Ateneo by becoming a mentor to other public high school students—and I enjoy doing so."

Queena N. Lee-Chua is a professor of mathematics and psychology at the Ateneo de Manila University. A Science and Health columnist of the INQUIRER, she has received several awards, including The Outstanding Young Filipinos Award, The Metrobank Outstanding Teacher Award, and the Carlos Palanca Memorial Award in literature. She may be reached at blessbook@yahoo.com.

The survey staff will give a lecture on Feb. 10 to parents and alumni at the Ateneo and on Feb. 17 at the Marikina City Hall. Details of the study can be found in the book, "Magaling ang Pinoy! How and Why Public School Students Achieve." For copies, call the Ateneo Office of Research and Publications at 426-6001 loc 5180 to 83 or e-mail orp@admu.edu.ph.

FRIENDS and relatives pray near the coffin of Jamal Khalifa at Ivato airport in Antananarivo, Madagascar Thursday. The body of Khalifa—a brother-in-law of Bin Laden—was flown to his family home in Saudi Arabia on Thursday after an autopsy. REUTERS

Khalifa body flown to Saudi Arabia

ANTANANARIVO—THE BODY OF A relative of al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden shot dead in Madagascar was flown to his family home in Saudi Arabia on Thursday after an autopsy.

Jamal Khalifa—a brother-in-law of Bin Laden—was killed by gunmen on Wednesday at his house in Madagascar.

The body would be flown to Medina in Saudi Arabia, said General Claude Ramananarivo, commander of Madagascar's gendarmerie. A Reuters witness later saw a "Saudi Arabian" plane with the body on board take off from Antananarivo airport.

Saudi media said on Thursday Khalifa was a close friend of Bin Laden's at university in the Red Sea city of Jeddah who went with Bin Laden to Afghanistan after the 1979 Soviet invasion.

Reports said Khalifa last saw Bin Laden in Sudan in 1992, and that after that was suspected at various times by US, Saudi and Jordanian authorities of involvement in militant activities but nothing was ever proved against him.

Ramananarivo told Reuters the autopsy was an obligatory formality but gave no details.

A police official from the Sakaraha district where Khalifa was killed said he had been shot in his stomach and thigh.

A second Saudi man, Quaid Abduljalil, was shot in the attack and evacuated by air to Tulear, the regional capital.

The Saudi foreign ministry issued a statement expressing sorrow and concern over the of death of Khalifa, who came from a prominent Medina family.

On Wednesday, Dubai-based television station Al Arabiya, said Khalifa had been staying at a mine he owns on the world's fourth largest island, located off the southeast coast of Africa.

Talking to the station, the victim's brother Malek Khalifa said the killers apparently wanted to rob his brother, saying 20 to 30 gunmen broke into his brother's bedroom and shot him dead "in cold blood." The Sakaraha official said about 10 men were involved. Another police official said a computer and briefcase had been stolen.

Malek denied his brother was involved in political activity, and said that apart from family ties, Jamal had no links to Bin Laden, a Saudi national who was stripped of his citizenship long before the Sept. 11 attacks on the United States.

The killing took place days after the Philippine Daily Inquirer published what it said was the last interview given by the leader of the Abu Sayyaf group before his death. Abu Sayyaf is the Philippines' deadliest Islamic militant group.

It quoted Khaddafy Janjalani as saying his group had received funds from two men close to Bin Laden, identifying one of them as Jamal Khalifa. In an e-mail sent to the INQUIRER shortly after the story came out, Khalifa denied any links with Abu Sayyaf. *Reuters*

Viets rescue 9 RP fishermen adrift at sea for 4 days

A VIETNAMESE FISHING BOAT RESCUED nine Filipino fishermen who spent four days adrift in the South China Sea, officials said yesterday.

The men were spotted clinging to an improvised raft 240 kilometers west of Subic on Wednesday, said Commander Joseph Coyme, Philippine Coast Guard spokesperson.

The fishermen's motorboat had capsized on Jan. 27 after big waves and strong winds snapped the craft's outrigger, a coast guard report said.

In the next three days, several foreign vessels passed but did not stop to rescue the drifting men, the report said. On the fourth day, crewmen from the Vietnamese fishing boat plucked them from the sea.

A coast guard vessel was sent to the area to pick up the fishermen, who were treated by a doctor on board and then brought to the coast guard headquarters in Manila on Friday, officials said.

The report said the fishermen left Limay town in Bataan on Jan. 25 for the vicinity of the Scarborough Shoal, which is claimed by China and the Philippines. *AP*

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Saturday, February 3, 2007
4th Week in Ordinary Time
Blasé / Ansgar

1st Reading: Heb 13:15-17, 20-21
Gospel: Mark 6:30-34

The apostles returned and reported to Jesus all they had done and taught. Then he said to them, "Go off by yourselves to a remote place and have some rest." For there were so many people coming and going that the apostles had no time even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a secluded area by themselves.

But people saw them leaving and many could guess where they were going. So, from all the towns they hurried there on foot, arriving ahead of them.

As Jesus went ashore he saw a large crowd, and he had compassion on them for they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began a long teaching session with them.

Commentary

We are given a short list of how to live: prayer of praise, good deeds, generosity, obedience (reminding them that they will render an account). And we lean on the Good Shepherd risen from the dead knowing that he wants to carry out God's will in us. Jesus has sent his disciples forth just as he too sends us. And we are to daily report back to him. We are to live for others, as difficult as that might be. It was so for Jesus and the disciples who sought a solitary place, a time apart but were still hounded by the crowds in desperate need. They seek the Word and presence of Jesus and they go on foot around the lake and catch them on the other side. And Jesus is the Shepherd. He looks at them with pity, needing a leader, someone to tend to them. And he teaches them—Jesus is the image of our leaders, ministers, and who we should be.

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2007 nat'l budget will be transparent, says Drilon

By Cynthia D. Balana

ANY FILIPINO CAN NOW ASK THE GOVERNment where the taxes he paid were spent.

Sen. Franklin Drilon said yesterday that a special provision in the recently approved P1.26 trillion budget for 1987 would allow any citizen to ask any government agency for any information on the use of public funds.

"Every government agency of the executive, legislative and judicial branches shall, upon request by any citizen, make available the data under their possession for information, in any form whatsoever, pertaining to the implementation of the appropriations under this act, including but not limited to information on projects, disbursement of funds, reports, contract biddings and awards," reads a new provision which was inserted into the 2007 General Appropriations Act (GAA).

Drilon said this special provision would ensure transparency in the implementation of public funds, information on government projects and use of the Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF) or the so-called pork barrel allocations.

Drilon, chair of the Senate finance committee, said the clause was one of the innovative provisions featured in the budget measure which has been submitted for signing to the President.

"With this new provision, any citizen can now insist on their right to know. The 2007 GAA carries a special provision that mandates full disclosure of the use of public funds by each and every government agency, allowing the public careful scrutiny of government funds, including the way pork barrel funds are spent," he said.

Drilon said that people's cynicism on the use of pork barrel funds was exacerbated by the fact that information on their use was not easily available to the public.

Drilon said the provision in the GAA stressed the right of the people to information on matters of public concern as enshrined in Section 7, Article III of the Constitution.

Drilon also said that different umbrella organizations of civil society groups had expressed satisfaction for the inclusion of safeguards in the use of public funds. These include the Caucus for Development-NGO Networks (CODE-NGO) and the Transparency and Accountancy Network (TAN).

TAN is composed of 23 organizations, mostly in the academe and business sector, including the Ateneo School of Government, Concerned Women of the Philippines, La Salle Institute of Governance, Philippine Center for Policy Studies, Makati Business Club, Social Weather Stations, and Transparency International-Philippines.

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NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

Notice is hereby given that **SOUTH SEA SURETY & INSURANCE CO., INC.** was ordered to cease and desist from transacting insurance business for cause effective September 21, 2006. On October 4, 2006, the Honorable Court of Appeals issued a Temporary Restraining Order valid for sixty (60) days, or until December 4, 2006. The Company subsequently filed a Motion for the Issuance of a Writ of Preliminary Injunction but the same was denied in a Resolution promulgated on December 11, 2006. In effect, the Cease and Desist Order issued earlier by this Commission was reinstated since December 5, 2006. Since then, no new and/or renewal business of any kind or character can be done by said company or for such company by its agents in the Philippines unless and until its authority to do business is restored by the Commissioner. The Company was placed under conservatorship on October 2, 2006, pursuant to the provisions of Section 248 of the Insurance Code, as amended.

Atty. Rosario Setias Reyes, with office address at Unit 403 Greenbelt Mansion, 106 Perea Street, Legaspi Village, Makati City, and contact numbers 8921598 and 8181111 Local 211, is the appointed Conservator.

(Sgd.) EVANGELINE CRISOSTOMO ESCOBILLO
Insurance Commissioner

(PDI – February 3, 2007)

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Please be advised that there is no vehicle access or parking available at the Seafront Compound. Pedestrian access will be limited to the F.B. Harrison gate only. Please bring a valid proof of identification.

For particulars, please contact.

Mr. Manuel Fidel C. Holandez
Tel. No. 528-6300 ext. 2702

(PDI – February 3 & 4, 2007)

ELDIE S. AGUIRRE/INQUIRER MINDANAO

TOO LATE THE DOCUMENT: Governor Piñol goes over the contents of a document he sent to the Supreme Court requesting for the creation of an independent court to handle cases involving terrorist suspects and to transfer them to Manila.

JAIL WARDEN Nilo Piñol points to the INQUIRER where the inmates headed after bolting prison. At press time yesterday North Cotabato Gov. Emmanuel Pinol sacked the warden even if he is a relative.

DENNIS JAY SANTOS/INQUIRER MINDANAO

48 bolt Cotabato jail; MILF rebels blamed for raid

From page A1

mates with about a dozen security guards working in two shifts.

Using an M303 grenade launcher, the raiders blasted a large hole in the perimeter fence to penetrate the jailhouse located in Barangay Amas here.

Guards sought cover

"They were armed with high-powered guns. A 15-minute exchange of fire between our group and the attackers occurred before they left," Assistant Jail Warden Redentor Marasigan said.

The guards were outnumbered and overpowered, he added.

"Jail guards had to seek cover and withdraw after grenades were hurled at them," Marasigan said.

In October last year, alleged MILF fighters also broke into the Maguindanao provincial jail in Cotabato City and spirited out a dozen inmates, including a bomb suspect.

The MILF denied any hand in yesterday's raid although a ranking rebel leader admitted that some of the suspects could be its members.

Three suspects in the 2003 bombing of a bus terminal in Kidapawan were among those who escaped. They were identified as Mundos Kair, Sultan Datu Ali and Guindo Tokan.

On red alert

A fourth suspected bomber, Kule Mamagong, also an MILF commander, refused to join the jailbreak, authorities said.

Mamagong was arrested early this month after he was linked to the Oct. 10 Makilala town explosion that killed six people.

At the time of yesterday's raid, the jail guards were on "red (full) alert" because of reports of an imminent attack.

Marasigan told reporters that the rebels, numbering 25 to 30, surprised the guards by firing a grenade launcher.

The grenade tore a hole in the wall at the back of the one-story jail building, and also wounded a guard and a trustee-inmate.

The raiders then destroyed the padlocks of the cells and herded the prisoners out, Marasigan said.

He said the other guards, some of whom rushed to the jail from their sleeping quarters, engaged the attackers in a brief firefight but could not stop the rebels.

To Liguasan Marsh

Marasigan said most inmates refused to join the escape.

The attackers and some of the escapees fled on foot toward the Liguasan Marsh area, an identified territory of the MILF.

Another batch of escapees reportedly commandeered a passenger jeep in Matalam town, about 5 km away from the jail.

Piñol said the intelligence reports about the imminence of an attack indicated that the MILF had long been planning to spirit out their jailed comrades.

An intelligence officer of the Army's 602nd Infantry Brigade, which has jurisdiction over North Cotabato, said they had also received similar reports.

"This was not an ordinary incident. This was a well-planned operation by the MILF to spring their members who are in jail for kidnapping and bombing," Piñol said.

Going slow on MILF

Told that the police were not immediately saying that the raiders were suspected MILF guerrillas, Piñol said on radio dzBB: "You must understand that the PNP (Philippine National Police) is under orders from the national government to go slow in pinning down the MILF because of the ongoing peace talks."

"I am not under the PNP. I am a local government executive and I say my piece when I need to say my piece," the governor said.

Piñol said 10 MILF members were among those who fled with the raiders. He did not say where he got the figure of 10.

'Shoot them down'

"I have ordered police to shoot these very dangerous people if they will resist arrest. They are better dead than a menace to our communities."

Von Al Haq, MILF ceasefire committee chair, said the attack was not sanctioned by his organization. But he admitted some of the attackers could be MILF supporters who acted on their own.

Ghadzali Jaafar, MILF political affairs chief, said the MILF leadership "does not sanction action that constitutes a violation of the existing ceasefire agreement."

Supt. Federico Dulay, North Cotabato police chief, said the police were not sure the attackers were MILF rebels.

"We are certain that they are allies of terror groups, like the Jemaah Islamiyah, because they freed the three bombers. But we are also looking into the possible involvement of the MILF," Dulay said.

MILF helping in manhunt

MILF spokesperson Eid Kabalu said Piñol and other authorities should not immediately link the MILF to acts of violence in Central Mindanao.

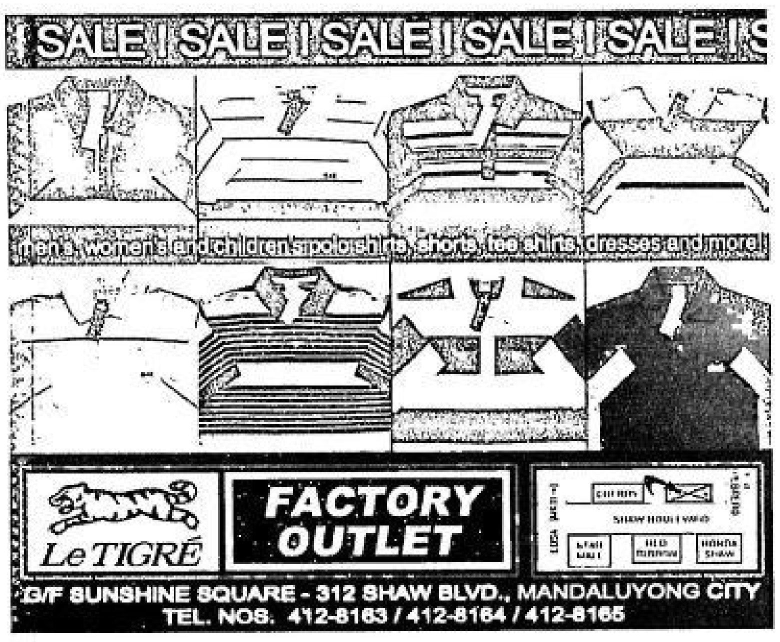
"We are not involved in the jailbreak. We are even willing to cooperate," Kabalu told the INQUIRER.

He said the MILF was now helping in the manhunt for the capture of the escapees.

Piñol offered a cash reward of P20,000 for each recaptured prisoner. He also announced the relief of the jail's warden, Noli Piñol, a relative.

Warden Piñol said in a report to the governor that some 60 armed men joined the initial attack at the back of the jail, then about 25 men in fatigues went into the jail compound.

The MILF has been fighting for self-rule for decades and has an estimated 11,000 armed fighters. It has been engaged in peace talks with the government and has forged a ceasefire. *Edwin O. Fernandez, Charlie C. Señase, Jeoffrey Maitem, Eldie S. Aguirre, Inquirer Mindanao, AP, Reuters*



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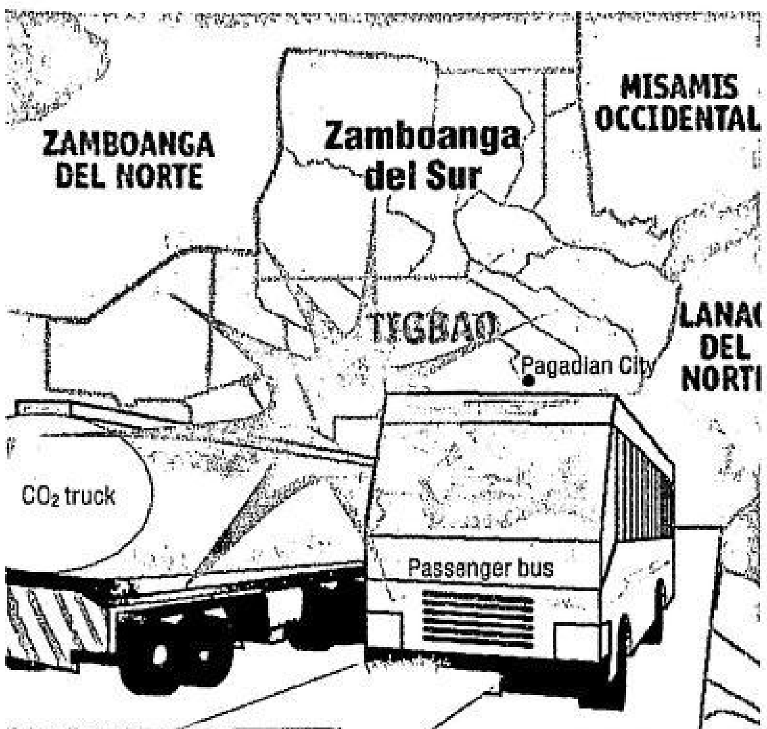


INFOGRAPHICS/ERNIE SAMBO

RESCUERS carry the body of one of the victims. AP

TRAGEDY IN ZAMBO

ARTIST'S rendering of the explosion as an oncoming passenger bus comes alongside a truck laden with chemicals. Blast hurls body parts of victims on to treetops.

Zambo gas . . .

From page A1

industries. In solid form, it is known as dry ice and is important in refrigeration. Experts say its containers may burst in the heat of fire or under extreme pressure.

The force of the explosion hurled parts of the truck as far as 1,000 meters away from the site, police said. The blast also mangled the faces of some of those killed, who included children.

The explosion was so powerful that it threw people as far as 100 meters away from the area, said Gloriana Maglon, whose husband (name not available) was among the badly injured.

"I saw body parts littering the area. Some were in the trees, others in the ravine," she said.

The truck was travelling downhill on the highway when its brakes apparently failed, police said.

Rescuers hit by blast

An RS bus carrying about 60 passengers was passing by when the accident happened. The blast from the truck blew away the roof of the bus and hurled it to the other side of the road, police said.

The dead and injured included those on the bus.

Several people from other vehicles rushed to the aid of the driver of the crashed truck but were also hit by the blast, witnesses said.

"It was at this moment that the explosion occurred," said Maj. Gary Lachica, executive officer of the Army's 53rd Infantry Battalion.

"Some passengers from the bus tried to help the driver of the smoking truck, then there was shouting and people started running," said Senior Supt. Ramon Ochotorena, police chief of Zamboanga del Sur.

He said police recovered more than 20 bodies and the decapitated head of a person.

Dexter Yabo, who witnessed the incident, said his brother Victor and some people from other vehicles tried to rescue the driver and his two helpers when the explosion occurred.

"When the smoke cleared I saw my elder brother Victor and scores of other people screaming and moaning in pain," Yabo told the INQUIRER.

The truck driver was among those killed, police said.

"The truck's brakes obviously malfunctioned and the driver lost control," Caringal said.

The incident caused a monstrous traffic jam.

Mark Gleen Tahum, 24, one of the truck's crew, said he saved himself by jumping off the truck before it overturned and helped pull out another truck helper.

He said they were bringing their cargo to a soft drink plant in Zamboanga City, about 200 km to the south.

Bystanders, rescuers

Merlyn Berbanio was riding a motorcycle driven by her husband when they were caught in traffic because of the overturned truck.

"All of sudden, there was a loud explosion and I saw thick smoke. I fell on the road. I could not get up. I could not walk," she said.

Roel Molina, chief of staff of Gov. Aurora Cerilles, said the exact casualty figure was difficult to determine because aside from those on the bus, many people on the ground were also killed.

Molina said the high casualty figure could be attributed to the fact that people had tried to approach the truck to help its occupants and that was when the chemicals exploded.

"Some of them also died. We could not say how many bystanders were killed because mangled bodies were everywhere," Molina said.

Molina said 29 bodies which were considered "whole" had been recovered from the burned bus. By "whole" bodies, he said he meant torsos with arms and legs.

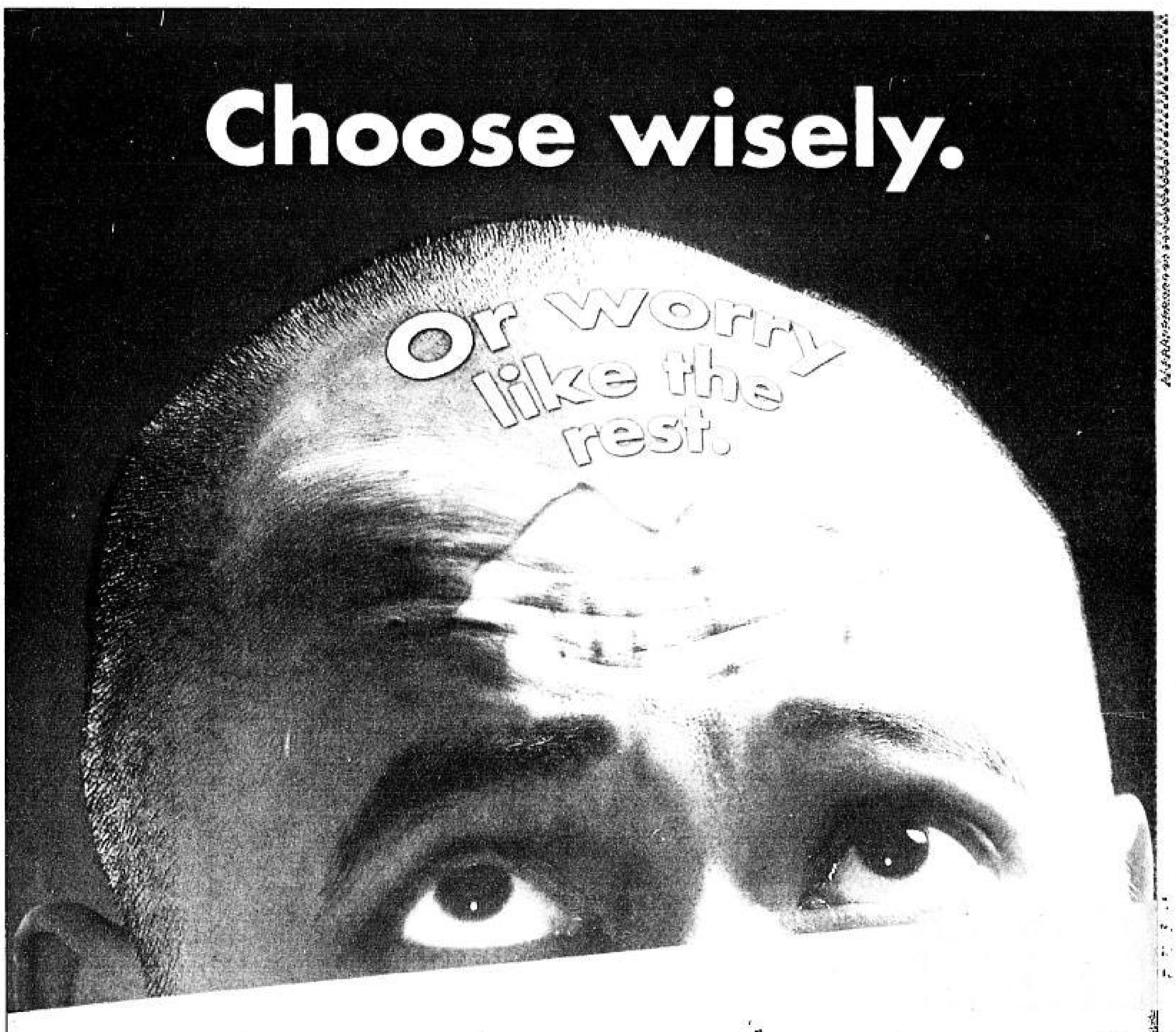
"Many of those inside (the bus) were burned beyond recognition or their bodies were so dismembered it was even difficult to determine who were children, or women or men," he said.

Not bomb attack

He said the lower part of the cargo truck disintegrated because of the explosion.

Police said some parts of the truck were recovered 1,000 meters away from the site.

"We categorically dismiss speculation that it was a bomb attack carried out by terrorists," Col. Emmanuel Sison, 53rd IB chief, also said. *With PDI Research and AP*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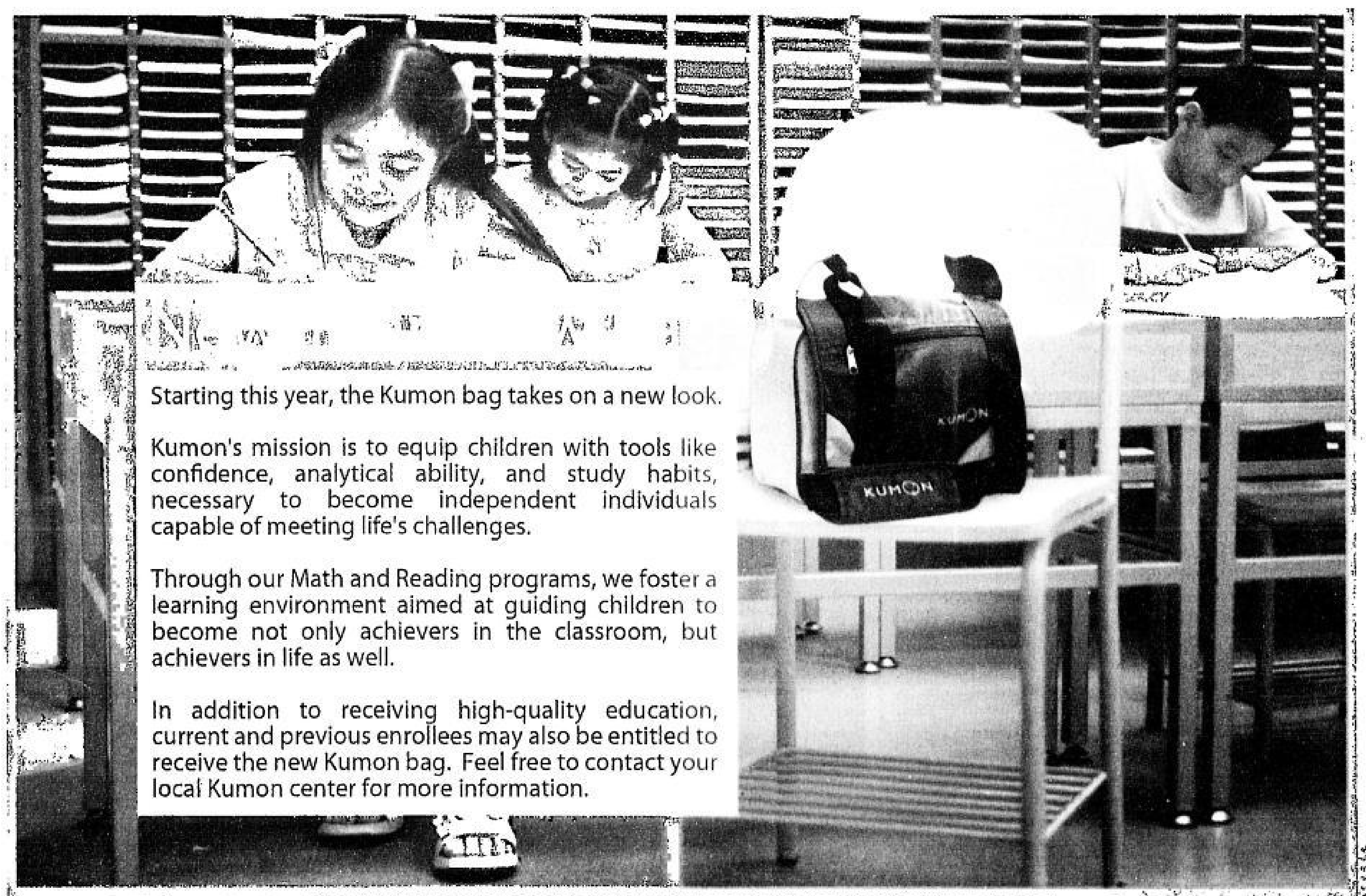

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OPINION

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Tatad's moral fight

EDITORIAL

FORMER SEN. FRANCISCO TATAD WANTS TO start a moral crusade to clean up Philippine politics. Forgive us if we do not plan to join the line he obviously wants to form behind him.

That Philippine politics needs cleaning up, there is no debate. But Tatad is hardly the right person to hold the broom. His first appearance on history's stage was to announce the declaration of martial law in 1972. His last appearance, almost 30 years later, was to execute on the Senate floor the majority's decision to leave the second Jose Velarde envelope unopened. That decision, which was obviously designed to stop the discovery of the truth, doomed the Estrada impeachment trial.

These are not the actions of a moral leader. Perhaps if he were to apologize and then atone for these actions, we might hear the words that issue from him differently. But he has not done so; if anything, as in the continuing controversy over the events of 2001, he continues to insist on his version.

Like the disgraced former president, Joseph Estrada, Tatad is quick to claim a clean conscience, which he vividly characterizes as the ability "to snore quietly in my sleep every night in the hope of waking up in the morning to a loving and merciful God." But if there is any moral lesson we have learned in the last six turbulent years, it is that conscience can be truly capacious—and that therefore it can neither be a true guide for nor a sure guarantee of collective moral action.

We need something a little more objective. Unfortunately for Tatad, that something is nowhere to be found in his now famous open letter.

We need our moral leaders to tell us the truth. But Tatad is parsimonious with the truth, beginning with the letter's very first paragraph. "My only concern is the honor of our party and wellbeing of our people," he writes. The United Opposition is not a party; surely Tatad knows that. And if the people's wellbeing is in fact his "only concern," why is removing himself from the UNO the only possible option? Surely he can fight for reform within. (Speaking of truth-telling: How does one snore quietly?)

We need our moral leaders to keep a sense of proportion. The dynasty issue is not the opposition's problem alone. Take a look at the Arroyos: The President's eldest son is a congressman from Pampanga and the middle son wants to be a congressman from Bicol (dynasty-building **and** carpetbagging, a decidedly more lethal combination). But by oh-so-dramatically publicizing his "principled" fight, Tatad has succeeded in turning the dynasty issue entirely against the opposition.

We need our moral leaders to be grounded on reality. Tatad apparently is under the impression that he was cheated out of victory in the 2004 elections. "At the counting, my votes mysteriously shrank by something like 80 percent as they traveled from the barangay precinct to the national canvassing center." This is news to us, and indeed to anyone who followed the 2004 elections closely. He wonders why, having gained "close to 11 million" votes in 1995, his 2004 total was "savaged to nearly half that number." He does not seem to understand that running a dismal race for vice president in 1998, his role in the Estrada impeachment trial, three years out of office—that all these had something to do with his current unelectability.

Not least, we need our moral leaders to be consistent. Tatad says he cannot accept a situation where three of the opposition's candidates for the Senate have close kin already in the chamber. He rationalizes the presence of Sen. Loi Ejercito and Sen. Jinggoy Estrada as an aberration, "the result of an extraordinary situation." There was a need for Estrada to show that he still enjoyed popular support, he says, hence Loi's candidacy and then Jinggoy's. But Loi ran in 2001. Surely her victory was enough to meet Estrada's need? What is the difference, then, between Jinggoy's candidacy in 2004 and JV Ejercito's in 2007? Is Tatad saying Estrada no longer needs to show he continues to enjoy public backing?

Here's the difference: Tatad was a candidate in 2004. He wasn't even considered as a candidate this year—at least until he had laid down his objection to something he had previously not objected to, and Estrada took him aside to offer him a slot. By then it was too late—for Tatad most of all.

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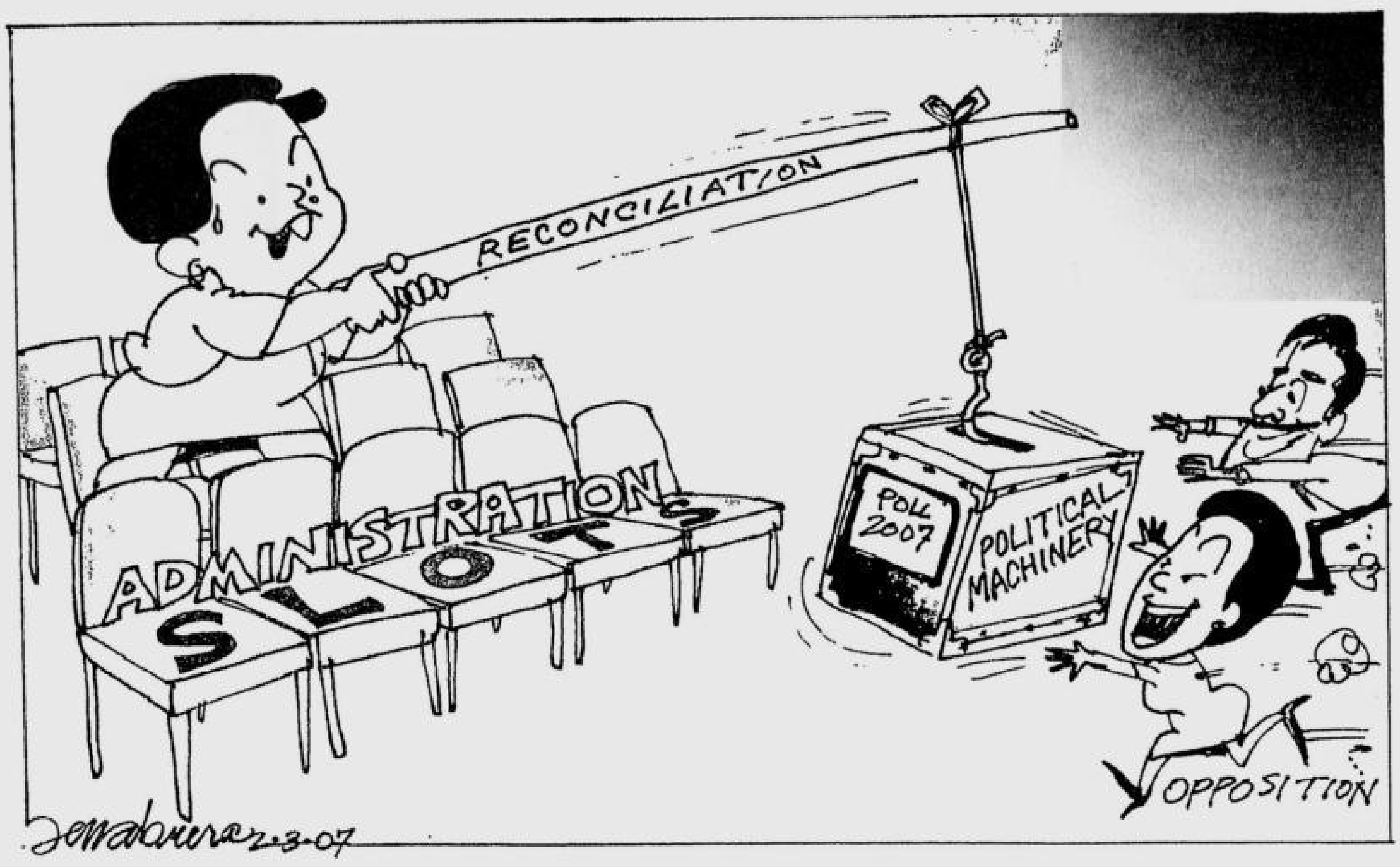

Twenty years of the 1987 Constitution

SEPARATE OPINION

Isagani A. Cruz

THE PRESENT CONSTITUTION COMPLETED its 20th year yesterday since its ratification on Feb. 2, 1987. It had been framed by a commission composed of 50 members appointed by President Corazon Aquino, who herself led the campaign for its approval in the required plebiscite. Many citizens doubtful about some of its provisions nevertheless voted for it because they felt it would provide the stability the country needed after the turmoil of the Marcos years. Opposition to it, while spirited, was largely disorganized and consequently ineffective.

The Constitution of 1935, after which the present charter was largely patterned, was amended after only five years with the lengthening of the presidential term of office, the replacement of the unicameral National Assembly with a bicameral Congress, and the conversion of the statutory Commission on Elections into a constitutional body. In 1947, after we had already become independent, it was weakened with the sneaky adoption of the Parity Amendment that formally made us an American satellite again. In 1972, it was revised by an elective constitutional convention but was castrated by Marcos during martial law with his Constitution of 1973 that deserves only this scornful mention here.

The Constitution of 1987 does not have what we might call a checkered history. There have been sporadic suggestions and even concrete attempts to change it but they have been unsuccessful so far. In 1997, the initiative intended to extend President Fidel Ramos' term of office met its defeat in the Santiago and Pirma cases for lack of a valid implementing law. Last year, another initiative, this time orchestrated by President Macapagal-Arroyo, also floundered in the Supreme Court to the people's applause.

President Arroyo and her sidekick, Speaker Jose de Venecia, have not given up their hope to replace the presidential government with a parliamentary system where they expect to remain in power as its prime minister. Who of them will be the head of the new government if it materializes is still in doubt. But that question and their determination to revise the Constitution by hook or by crook will have to be on hold pending the outcome of the elections this coming May.

Much depends on the results of such elections because the composition of the new Congress will determine if the Constitution shall be rewritten and, if so, the process to be employed. If the House of Representatives remains under the control of the present Rainbow Coalition, which is doubtful if the elections are clean, which is also doubtful, it may revive the failed initiative after correcting the defects of the initiative last year. The second method, the facetiously but appropriately called Con-ass, will probably not be attempted again because of the continued Senate opposition to it. That will leave the only remaining allowable method, the calling of a constitutional convention.

It may be premature at this time to discuss the constitutional convention when the attention of the public is focused on the election candidates, particularly for the Senate. Certificates of candidacy must be filed not later than Feb. 12, but the administration and the opposition have yet to finalize their respective slates. Notably, there is a scramble for inclusion in the opposition ticket but an apparent reluctance to be drafted into the administration list.

The latest report is that former senators Tito Sotto and Tessie Oreta, stalwarts of Joseph Estrada during his impeachment trial, are willing to join Ms Gloria's carnival barker team and their erstwhile adversary is prepared to accept them, faults and all, for their "winnability." Winnability without ability seems to be the criterion for public service now.

I think the constitutional convention should be an important issue in the coming elections. Instead of regaling their audience with song and dance or an exhibition of their martial arts, the candidates should show that they are not mere entertainers. They should discuss why, or why not, a constitutional convention should be called and, in the affirmative, the qualifications to be required of the elective delegates.

Such credentials should include academic proficiency, which is not required of elective officials under the Constitution, which must be the reason for the many incompetents in the public service today.

There is also the apprehension that the current members of the legislature may field and secure the election to the constitutional convention of their spouses and other relatives to gain control by their political dynasties of what ought to be a non-partisan convention. This should be avoided by disqualifying from the body candidates belonging to a political party or related, within a legally prescribed civil degree of consanguinity or affinity, to any political official in the government.

But will there be elections in May with Ms Arroyo facing certain defeat unless Garci comes to the rescue?

Hope for Hubert Webb

GET REAL

Solita Collas-Monsod

AND SO THE 11-YEAR NIGHTMARE OF Hubert Webb continues. The Court of Appeals Special Division of Five, by a 3-2 vote, reaffirmed its December 2005 decision upholding the decision of Regional Trial Court Judge Amelia Tolentino (now a justice of the Court of Appeals) finding Webb and five co-accused as principals and one co-accused as accessory of the crime of rape with homicide.

My nightmare continues as well, because it gives me nightmares that an innocent person has already spent 11 years behind bars and will continue to do so as his case goes up on appeal to the Supreme Court. I've said it before, and I will say it again: Hubert Webb is innocent of that crime.

Nevertheless I find no small amount of consolation in the fact that while the decision of the 10th Division of the Court of Appeals in December 2005 unanimously upheld Tolentino, a closer review of the facts of the case, upon motion for reconsideration by Webb et al., caused one of the three justices—Associate Justice Lucenito Tagle—to change his mind. This lack of unanimity necessitated, per Rules of the Court of Appeals, the creation of a (special) division of five by adding two justices, who were chosen by raffle. And one of those two justices—Renato Dacudao—came to the same conclusion that Tagle did: Webb et al. were **not guilty** of the crime of rape with homicide. Their dissenting opinions are music to my ears, and because their logic is unassailable, it gives me hope that the Supreme Court will see things their way.

The disagreement between the majority and the minority centered around two issues: whether or not the witnesses were credible, and whether or not the defense of alibi was strong. Obviously, the majority took the position that the prosecution witnesses were credible, the defense witnesses were not, and the defense of alibi was weak—the same view as Tolentino's. The minority took the opposite view.

Here are some highlights of Dacudao's dissent:

"The prosecution's case is inherently weak, built as it is upon the flagrantly improbable and incredible story woven by a shifty and shuffling government star witness; and second, because the defense was able to prove convincingly that it was physically impossible for ... Hubert Webb to have been at the scene of the crime at the time of its commission.

"... I am far from being impressed with the veracity or trustworthiness of the testimony of the prosecution's 'star witness,' Jessica Alfaro, considering her history of drug addiction, vis-à-vis the plain and palpable inconsistencies, contradictions and improbabilities in her testimonies, plus the fact that it took her four years to come forward to testify. The long delay goes against the very grain of human experience. Her drug addiction ... ought to have warned the court not to rely on her memory, which could or might have been impaired or addled by substance abuse.

"... I am thus constrained to wonder what strange casuistry or esoteric logic inspired and impelled the trial court to give its unconditional vote of confidence to Ms Alfaro (indeed to take her testimony as gospel truth).

"... It also bothers me that Ms Alfaro's narration of the events ... was in many points uncannily similar to that set forth in the extrajudicial confessions or *sinumpaang salaysay* executed [in 1991] by certain members of the so-called 'Akyat-Bahay Gang.' (*The similarities: three vehicles used; same behavior toward security guard, climbing fence and opening gate; putting out garage light; breaking the glass in the door; woman shouting 'Magnanakaw' and killed; young girl crying and shouting and killed, etc. One of the participants surrendered and executed his affidavit because, by his account, he was bothered by his conscience.—SCM*)

"... Ms Alfaro's testimony puts too severe a strain on the credulity of this Court. I think it takes the faith of 20 men to believe her extraordinary tale.

"... As between the incredible and implausible testimony of the government's 'star witness' Jessica Alfaro and the public or official documents presented by ... Hubert Webb, I am more inclined to give greater weight and credence to the latter. The passport and certifications, aside from the fact that they enjoy the presumption of regularity, they being public or official documents passed through the hands of several government authorities who acted thereon in accordance with their solemn duty. In view of this, I find it hard to imagine how these could have been fabricated—unless one has such tremendous power and influence strong enough to sway all those people in the offices concerned, including those in the United States. The point is that the prosecution in the case under review has not adduced a shred of evidence that any of these ... official documents was a fabrication. Nor yet that the Webb family—especially former Sen. Freddie Webb—has such tremendous power or influence to sway all the people in the offices concerned, including those in the US Department of State and in the US Department of Justice.

"... While the defense of alibi as a rule deserves scant consideration ... it is not always ... without merit; in fact, when it is fortified by well-nigh incontrovertible documentary evidence and juxtaposed with the vagaries, improbabilities and uncertainties of the prosecution's evidence, as in the case under review, the defense of alibi must be accepted as meritorious, and should carry the day for (Webb)."

Hang on, Hubert. There is hope.

New Legion award for Tritz

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

THE PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL FOR RESponsible Voting (PPCRV), which recently received Comelec approval to serve as a citizen's arm for the May elections, is now asking permission to conduct its own parallel quick count. The problem is that Namfrel has traditionally been the entity recognized to conduct it. Under the law, only one citizen's arm is authorized to receive the sixth copy of the electoral returns, and this has always gone to Namfrel, headed by Jose Concepcion, which had relied on a lot of support from church people in the past. What's intriguing is that the PPCRV, a Catholic Church-based group, is now represented by civil and religious leaders who are closely identified with the anti-Arroyo movement. The Standard in its Feb. 2 issue identified Christian Monsod, IT consultant Gus Lagman and longtime Namfrel and Makati Business Club official Guillermo Luz as being behind the Church group's petition, although Luz was also quoted as saying he didn't know anything about it. The Comelec will hold a hearing this Tuesday on the PPCRV's petition.

* * *

Recall that some of the above personalities joined the call for President Macapagal-Arroyo's resignation in July 2006. In addition, some bishops, led by CBCP president Archbishop Angel Lagdameo, have become increasingly critical of GMA; in fact Lagdameo is sounding more and more like Dagupan Archbishop Oscar Cruz by the day. Thus, on this issue of conducting a quick count, it's logical to ask whether the PPCRV can do an impartial and credible job, given its critical stance. On the other hand, Namfrel has maintained strict neutrality in various elections and has had tremendous experience in this task. I think it would do a far more credible job than the PPCRV.

* * *

My job of serving as PRO for Fr. Pierre Tritz and Erda Foundation for the past 20 years has been a breeze, as awards and honors have rained on this saintly priest, now 92 years old, for his noble work in saving street children from becoming dropout statistics. Last Wednesday, President Jacques Chirac of France, through Ambassador Gerard Chesnel, conferred on Fr. Tritz France's premier and most prestigious decoration, the Order of the Legion of Honor, with rank of officer, at the Erda-Tech School in Pandacan. In 1996, Fr. Tritz was already conferred the lowest of the five ranks of the Legion, that of "knight," so this is a promotion for him. As Chesnel explained, the highest honor a private citizen can aspire for is the rank of "commander," since its highest rank, the "Grand Cross," is reserved only for heads of state. In 1993, Fr. Tritz was also conferred the National Order of Merit, with rank of knight, an award created by Gen. Charles de Gaulle. Chesnel explained that the Legion was created by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1802, and it is conferred on French or foreign men and women for outstanding achievements in military or civil life. More recently, it has been conferred on entrepreneurs, high-level civil servants, sports champions, etc. As an "officer," Fr. Tritz outranks Chesnel who is only a "knight."

* * *

What makes this premier French award interesting is that in 1974, Fr. Tritz gave up his French citizenship and took his oath, together with a handful of other Jesuits, before President Ferdinand Marcos as a Filipino citizen. In his Legion acceptance speech, he related that when he informed the French ambassador then of his decision, the latter incredulously exclaimed, "*Mon Dieu*, nobody gives up French citizenship." Chesnel explained, with typical Gallic humor, that "it was not due to any serious misunderstanding with his native country, but in order to facilitate his work with Filipino street children. Otherwise, I wouldn't be here presiding over this award ceremony." Far from being vindictive toward Fr. Tritz, he said, France has chosen to recognize his achievements three times.

The Filipino people, whom Fr. Tritz has embraced for half a century, can do no less.

* * *

People are holding their breath about the new promise of a "soft opening" for Naia Terminal 3, given how many times its opening has been pushed back due to legal questions and unfinished construction. But before we despair further, look what's happening to the multibillion ultra-modern Suvarnabhumi Airport in Bangkok, which opened last September. I was there on a brief visit recently and I noted that this gleaming masterpiece of steel and glass, touted as the most splendid in Asia, has become "trouble-plagued" and is now criticized as "an international embarrassment."

Thailand's Department of Civil Aviation postponed renewing an international safety certificate as the airport's eastern and western runways have to be repaired due to cracks. Thailand's transport minister said there are over 100 damaged spots in 25 areas and repair could cost anywhere between $8.6 million and $86 million. Since repairs on the western runway have cut its usable length by half, only smaller aircraft can land there, and the traffic has caused some incoming flights to be diverted to other airports. Because of the cracked taxiways, planes cannot approach 11 of the 51 parking aprons, and 10 of the 102 concertina-like air bridges are unusable. Authorities ordered the relocation of 12 electrical control cabinets in the passenger terminal, which could catch fire. A pipe in a passenger terminal toilet caused water to leak to the lower floor and damage baggage. And there are reports of irregularities in the management of commercial space.

In an interview with CNN, Thai strongman Gen. Sonthi Boonyaratkalin alluded to the airport woes in explaining corruption problems that, as a report put it, "prompted him to stage the coup d'etat on Sept. 19 last year." The airport corruption was said to have taken place during the tenure of ousted Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra.

Doubtless GMA would also not hesitate to say the corruption in Naia 3 occurred under her predecessor's watch.

A school and a dream

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

SHORTLY AFTER THE WAR, MY PARENTS, TOgether with the rest of my Mama's siblings, all went home "to roost" under the wing of my grandmother, Doña Emilia Braganza, in the ancestral home in Alaminos, Pangasinan.

War had shattered their equanimity, rattled their sense of privilege and entitlement, and made them rethink their priorities. But mostly, they needed the solace of being together as one family, sheltering under the roof of "The Big House," even if their daily peace would be shaken time and again by Lola Eming's galvanic outbursts of temper.

In time, though, they began to search for means of survival other than depending on the fruit of my Lola's lands and largesse. I suppose you could say they were also bored out of their skulls.

My father, Ernesto Jimenez, in particular, must have been quite antsy. He had helped set up settlements of landless farmers from all over the country in the wilds of Mindanao before the war, and only fled the island with his wife Narni and young children after Liberation. I can imagine that he looked around Alaminos and environs in search of another mission to fulfill and what fired his imagination was a school.

The school my father envisioned would, he hoped, provide quality education even for the children of poor farmer families in the barrios of Alaminos and in neighboring towns. This is why he thought of the name Great Plebeian College, after The Great Plebeian himself, Andres Bonifacio.

* * *

POOLING his resources and those of the family, mainly Mama's brothers, sisters and in-laws, my father finally had the wherewithal to found Great Plebeian College in 1947. The first corporate board was composed of, aside from my father, Agapito C. Braganza (a cousin of my mother's), Fernando and Salvador Braganza (my mother's older brothers), Doña Maria de Braganza (an aunt of my mother's), Rev. Fr. Tomas Chanco (the parish priest), Tomas Rapatalo, Dr. David C. Rabago, Gil Rausa and Dr. Victoriano Ungson Sr. (my mother's uncle). Salud Garcia, my mother's older sister who would play a major role in Great Plebeian's history, was one of the original stockholders, along with the other members of the family.

To entice students, Papa and the other founders would go around Western Pangasinan, convincing parents to send their children to Great Plebeian.

The new school had humble beginnings, indeed, with classrooms set up at the start in the *silong* or ground floor of the Braganza home as well as in other ancestral homes in the town center. Eventually, Great Plebeian moved to rented quarters in the Montemayor residence, and then to a lot owned by Doña Maria on Plaridel Street, since renamed Don Pedro Reinoso Street. Great Plebeian College has stood on this site since, though the original wood-and-*sawali* (sheets of woven nipa) building has since been replaced by more modern and sturdier structures. And while my father and older relatives were among the pioneer faculty, over the years, they have either sold their shares or lost all proprietary interest in the institution.

* * *

BUT the Braganzas of Alaminos, as well as we, the children of the school's founder, have always maintained an interest in, and feeling for, Great Plebeian. Not the least because my two youngest siblings—Joni Tan Cardoso and Charo—went there for high school where they had my father, who had taken up teaching again while recovering from a stroke, as a teacher in Spanish and declamation.

Joni remembers Papa staying in school long after the close of classes just to tutor his students who were failing in his class, "not wanting them to lose their chance to graduate from high school just because they couldn't pass Spanish." The children of my uncle Tom Braganza, who all grew up in Alaminos, likewise remember their high school days in Great Plebeian, where being the nephew and nieces of the school director, our Tita Salud, could not guarantee them immunity from disciplinary action, with Tita Salud being the chief enforcer.

My nephews and nieces, particularly the children of my sister Neneng who spent every summer vacation in Alaminos, to this day retain fond memories of summer afternoons spent in a classroom in Great Plebeian dutifully learning how to type.

* * *

AND now, Great Plebeian College, the fruit of my Papa's dream to contribute to the rebuilding of the country from the devastation of war, is celebrating its 60th Foundation Anniversary. Part of the celebrations is a Grand Alumni Homecoming on March 16-17.

The college has certainly come a long way, as Tita Salud's daughter Lulu, who is now the school director, said in a letter to GPC alumni. "Many of you, I'm sure, still recall the wood-and-*sawali* structure that was Plebeian's excuse for a main building. Now, the structures have changed and a new building is being constructed… The school still has to improve on its facilities so that we could offer more courses and have our programs accredited. But even while GPC faces still daunting challenges, we can truly be proud of what this college has become. But I am prouder still of the successes chalked up by you, the alumni."

An estimated 7,200 young men and women have passed through the halls of Great Plebeian since its founding, either as high school or college students. At present, it offers courses ranging from education, history and English to accountancy, commerce, midwifery, hotel and restaurant management, computer and electronics technology and a six-month caregiver course. It is also applying for accreditation in computer programming, automotive servicing, business administration and other courses. A long way, indeed, from its beginnings in makeshift classrooms in some old homes and as one man's dream.

China's financial fetish

WORLD VIEW

Zhang Jun

WITH THE DRUM BEATING FOR THE DEVELOPment of the costal areas of Tianjin near Beijing, the curtain seems to be rising on yet another "financial center" in China.

When Shanghai sought a similar role several years ago, bankers and investors around the world wondered whether the aim was really for Shanghai to replace Hong Kong as China's financial heart. In the current pilot project, Tianjin in China's north and Shanghai in the south are competing against each other, prompting even more second-guessing.

Once upon a time, no one had any idea about how to create a "financial center." A financial center was simply a great metropolis where enormous financial dealings took place. Cities such as London and New York became known as financial centers only after they had proved themselves in the role.

China's authorities seem to be unaware that many major cities have not had the luck to become financial centers. There is no economic or other theory that explains why a city called a "financial center" should be more valuable or lovelier than others. Why, then, should China make developing global financial centers a vital national goal? Does China really need its own financial centers of world standing? Does the world need China to have them? Or is such a goal necessary because a financial center can determine the fate of a great metropolis?

Nothing in the history of finance, the evolution of cities, or modern economics provides a clear answer. It is the Chinese who have endowed the term "financial center" with such weight and meaning by trying to dissect the functions of such cities and to quantify every detail. As a result, China's authorities are prepared to pick a city and order it to create the functions of a financial center, as if such a thing can be constructed like a building—a concept that could not be more off the mark.

> China's authorities are prepared to pick a city and order it to create the functions of a financial center, as if such a thing can be constructed

Indeed, according to modern development models of finance, whether or not a physical center of finance exists is no longer a meaningful issue. Owing to historical factors and opportunities, financial transactions were concentrated in cities that were traditionally closely linked to the rise of European and American capitalism. But what counts nowadays is not where financial transactions physically take place, but rather the growing importance and globalization of finance in the operation of the world economy.

Cities do not become financial centers because they are more "excellent" than other cities, or because they have done something that other cities failed to do. Instead, once financial transactions begin to concentrate in a place, it becomes hard to move them to other places. A free-market economy and its legal traditions—both indispensable to the survival of financial centers—certainly help them to rise, but that initial rise has always been attributable to historical evolution, not government strategy.

In this sense, China's effort to deliberately create, through government fiat, global financial centers is both exacting and dogmatic. There is no doubt that China needs its financial sector to develop soundly in order to ensure sustained economic growth. And there is now a common understanding in China that meeting this objective requires that the government safeguard financial liberalization.

But progress has been slow, because China's rulers have put nurturing financial centers—which should be the objective of local governments—at the heart of the country's financial development. Indeed, equating financial liberalization with privileges for cities designated as "financial centers" undermines the very goals of liberalization, which is to reduce government control and to accelerate the development of financial markets.

China's financial system is failing in that respect, owing to frequent administrative and political intervention. As a result, Shanghai has been restricted from making the best of its financial functions, and Hong Kong, Asia's acknowledged financial center, from assisting China's financial modernization.

What China needs most is a financial sector capable of harnessing the forces of liberalization and globalization to drive economic growth in the decades ahead. The time has come to cast off the burden of building financial centers, and focus instead on advancing the modernization of Chinese finance. ***Project Syndicate***

Zhang Jun is director of the China Center for Economic Studies, Fudan University, Shanghai, China.

Rope of faith

YOUNG BLOOD

Chris Lawrence Isidro

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

JUST DAYS BEFORE THIS YEAR'S QUIAPO FIESTA, I AGAIN received an invitation to come and join in its celebration. I had missed going there for three years in a row, but this time I was able to fix my schedule so that I could go.

So there I was again on the same spot were I had been four years earlier, right on the corner of Bilibid Viejo and Ramon Streets, but now already graduated from law school and done with the bar exams. I found out that this was a special fiesta as it marked the 400th year of the coming of the Black Nazarene from Spain.

I decided to join the procession as a thanksgiving to the Lord for all the blessings I had received the previous year. My problem was that no one was coming with me since the only other guy around that I knew was a Muslim. I told myself that if I saw someone I knew in the procession, I would join him right away.

As if it were a sign from God, I saw a fraternity brod who had asked me just days earlier to join the procession after learning that I was a devotee of the Black Nazarene. I called out to him and said I was joining or, as devotees put it, "*sumalang sa prusisyon*."

I gave my wallet and my cell phone to my wife. As I removed my shoes and my socks, I could hear a voice in my head saying, "This is it! This is it!" Adrenalin was starting to kick in as I kissed my wife goodbye.

My "sherpa" and I went toward the image of Poong Nazareno which was already near the Manuel L. Quezon University. All the time, he was giving me instructions on how to grasp the rope. He said that I should always be careful when the rope was thrown because being tall, I might get caught inside an "*otso*" or a circular slack in the rope and get crushed when it tightened. He also told me just to raise a hand in case I wanted out and people would be more than willing to pull me out of there. Everyone was to be addressed as "Kapatid," he said, adding that I should not worry too much since there were many people directing the multitude of devotees pulling the two ropes of the carriage carrying the image of the Black Nazarene.

I knew that the carriage was near when people in front of me started pushing one another and gravitating toward the rope. I felt like a sardine being forced into a can.

When we heard one of the organizers yelling, "*Bitaw* (Let go)!" that was our cue to move toward the rope. When the rope was raised, we threw ourselves into the mass of bodies and tried to grab it. One of the organizers noticed that I was having a hard time and prodded me by saying, "*Balikatin mo, kapatid* (Put it on your shoulder, brother)!"

With one huge push, I managed to squeeze myself into the line and grab the rope with my left arm. Then I planted it on my shoulder and hung on to the shoulder of the guy in front of me with my right hand.

I had done it! I was really holding on to the rope and chanting, "Viva! Viva! Viva!" It felt like I had finally reached the summit after hiking for hours.

Many seconds passed before I started saying my prayer. I still could not believe that I was holding the rope carrying the miraculous image. Then I started pouring my heart out in prayer. I thanked the Lord for all the blessings He had showered upon me and asked forgiveness for all my sins. I also said a prayer for my special intentions.

Even as I was holding the rope, dozens of emotions swept over me. I was concentrating on hanging on to it while keeping my ears cocked for any command coming from the organizers.

I could hardly breathe as I swayed with the rope. My chest was pressed against the back of the person in front of me. When I felt I could not hold on any longer, I just let go of the rope and tried to make my way to the sidewalk. This was a dangerous move. Every time I got too far from the rope, I would find myself walking between the gutter and the sidewalk and bumping into people watching from the sidelines. Since the crowd watching from the sidewalk was not as compact as those marching in the procession, one was even more likely to trip there and perhaps get trampled upon.

I was out of breath when I finally got back to my wife. She told me she and her friends were so worried when they saw me clutching the rope because my face was already turning red.

It took me a long time to compose myself and take in everything that happened. Truly there are experiences that cannot be expressed in words. Even if my body was aching in every imaginable place, I made the whole experience my offering to the Black Nazarene, knowing that I had just felt some of His own sufferings.

People might regard this ritual as sheer fanaticism, and perhaps they are right. But as far as I'm concerned, it's what you do when everything settles back to normal that's really important. It is not how many times you touched the rope that matters but how you live your life after the experience. It is how you conform with the covenant you made with God and how you work toward making yourself a better person. At the end of the day, no amount of touching the rope can help you achieve that.

Chris Lawrence Isidro, 25, is a graduate of the Ateneo de Manila Law School.

NOTICE TO YOUNGBLOOD CONTRIBUTORS:

Send your contributions by e-mail to youngblood@inquirer.com.ph together with your address, age and the school, course and year you're enrolled in or, if employed, the position you're holding and the company you work with. Contributions to Youngblood should not have been previously published.

THEY SAID

Critical exercise

"As a nation, we cannot afford yet another controversial electoral exercise that further aggravates social distrust and hopelessness."

—CBCP president Angel Lagdameo in a pastoral letter that calls for clean elections

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The National Association of Philippine Newspapers

Abandoning the few honest candidates for lack of diplomas

ALLOW US TO JOIN THE DIALOGUE BETween Ang Kapatiran (PDI, 1/13/07) and David San Juan (PDI, 1/8/07) on the issue of elitism.

1. San Juan has extensively discussed the issues pertaining to faux intellectuals and thinking unschooled celebrities. That they do exist is a fact admitted by both sides.

2. In an economy where college-level education has been and is largely unavailable to a large segment of society—principally for economic reasons—San Juan is right in his perception that Ang Kapatiran's advocacy requiring candidates (for certain elective positions in government) to possess college/university degrees is incontrovertibly elitist.

Consider further that the requirement in effect prevents this large sector of the electorate from voting for one of its own, thereby limiting representation to proxies at best.

It would help if our political scientists conduct a research to find out if the constitutions of established democracies (or even of the more recent ones) have such a requirement.

3. Ang Kapatiran likens the evaluation of electoral candidates to the process in use with applicants for employment. We would like to believe that the hierarchy of values by which Ang Kapatiran would assess candidates stress primarily the more desirable character traits of sincerity, dedication and morals; secondarily, track record if any, be it in government service, the professions, business, civil society etc.; and least of all, academic credentials, which even for employment are subordinated to relevant experience.

As a cynic puts it, among the elected, college graduates are a dime a dozen, whereas those possessing the character traits primarily sought are a small minority—if not a rarity.

It would then seem ironic that Ang Kapatiran (like Diogenes of ancient Greece with his lantern in search of a few honest men on the streets of Athens) would abandon those found for want of diplomas.

We urge Ang Kapatiran to reconsider this singular but critical deterrent to its appeal for broad support.

—ALFREDO V. ASUNCION,
93 Castrillo St.,
Barangay Ugong Norte,
Quezon City 1110

DFA: Court ordered release of Chinese poachers

I WRITE IN REFERENCE TO THE EDITORIAL "Alarming diplomacy" (PDI, 1/30/07) which carried the unsubstantiated assertion by the NGO Pamalakaya that the foreign affairs and agriculture departments and their respective secretaries conspired in "selling the country's national sovereignty and patrimony" in the case against the crew members of the vessel Hoi Wan, which was found poaching at the Tubbataha Reef National Marine Park.

Pamalakaya based its assertion on a diplomatic note received by the DFA and DA from the Chinese Embassy. In an earlier report, in another paper, the group's chair was quoted as stating that the Chinese ambassador's "letter would logically lead us to the conclusion that the two high officials interceded (for the release of the poachers)." This statement is a classic case of *non sequitur*.

The accused were released not through the DFA's or DA's intervention but upon the orders of the Regional Trial Court of Puerto Princesa on its own authority and discretion. Also, the responsibility for enforcing the law on this matter lies with the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Philippine Coast Guard and Department of Justice, among others. The DFA is respectful of these agencies' prerogatives.

As early as Jan. 5, the DFA had said that the case is for our courts to decide. Also on that date, the Office of the President, through Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said, "We will go through the usual (court) process."

Since the start of the case, the DFA has made clear to the Chinese that as far as the Philippine government is concerned: (a) the case is before Philippine courts, which will determine if there have been violations of Philippine laws and international conventions; (b) the Philippines is cognizant of the rights of their nationals under Philippine and international law and will give due regard to those rights; and (c) due process will be observed in the expeditious resolution of the case.

In its "people-centered diplomacy," the DFA pursues, in the international arena, policies anchored on sustainable development that encourages economic growth while promoting environmental protection, and that at the same time is meant to achieve the overarching goal of eradicating poverty.

The DFA has been engaged in issues and initiatives that may mitigate climate change, preserve biodiversity and safeguard maritime resources. A signal contribution was the launching of the Asean Center for Biodiversity in UP Los Baños two years ago. In addition, the DFA's Maritime and Ocean Affairs Office has done significant work in further delineating and protecting our maritime boundaries.

The men and women of the DFA and the foreign service are committed to advancing the interest of the country and the Filipino people in the world community. We will continually work with all sectors, notably those who care much about our fragile marine environment.

—J. EDUARDO MALAYA,
acting spokesman,
Department of Foreign Affairs

An open challenge to religious leaders

ONCE AGAIN, THE FILIPINO NATION IS BACK to its favorite pastime—politics. Everywhere you go, people talk about the forthcoming May elections and the probable candidates from senators down to councilors.

It is no different here in San Juan, Metro Manila. As early as December 2006, residents of San Juan have been asking who the mayoral candidates would be since our incumbent mayor, JV Ejercito, has announced his candidacy for senator. There is talk that his mother, former actress Guia Gomez, will run for mayor and try to assume the office to be vacated by her son. This explains why the streamers of Gomez, conveying her Christmas message, are scattered all over San Juan.

The rumored candidacy of Gomez for mayor of San Juan was somehow confirmed by a story which reported that Sen. Jinggoy Estrada might field his wife, Precy Estrada, in the mayoral race. (PDI, 1/11/07) Should Gomez pursue the mayoralty, this will put the Catholic Church, the Iglesia ni Cristo of Bishop Eraño Manalo, the El Shaddai of Bro. Mike Velarde, the Jesus is Lord Movement of Bro. Eddie Villanueva, and even Bro. Eli Soriano's Ang Dating Daan and all other moralists to a severe test.

Will they support the candidacy of someone who is known to have, and is still having, an illicit relationship with a married man? Well, as the saying goes, *abangan ang susunod na kabanata*.

—DAVE BACANI,
605 Gen. Segundo St.,
San Juan, Metro Manila

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT
National Capital Region
DY Int'l Bldg., 1650 San Marcelino
cor. General Malvar St., Malate, Manila

NOTICE OF FILING OF APPLICATION/S FOR ALIEN EMPLOYMENT PERMIT/S (AEP/S)

Notice is hereby given that the following companies/employers have filed with this Regional Office application/s for Alien Employment Permit/s.

Name and address of Company/Employer	Name of Foreign National	Position
IBM DAKSH BUSINESS PROCESS SERVICES PHILIPPINES, INC. 30/F PBCom Tower, 6795 Ayala Avenue, Makati City	Rahul Mehta	Assistant Manager – Workforce
TOPGAMES, INC. Unit C, 8/F Marvin Plaza Bldg., Chino Roces Ave., Makati City	Kwok Wah Lo	Operations Director
HANJINPHIL CORPORATION 2/F, Eurovilla Condo. I, Herrera St., Legaspi Village, Makati City	Younggun Kim	Architectural Manager
HANJINPHIL CORPORATION 2/F, Eurovilla Condo. I, Herrera St., Legaspi Village, Makati City	Yeong Bae Kim	Mechanical Engineer
FORMOSTAR GARMENT (PHILS.) CO., INC. 105 M. Alvarez Ave., Talon V, Las Piñas City	Tsan-Tsai Lee	Packing / Finishing Technician
WORLD KING AND QUEEN TRADING CORP. Financial Center, D. Macapagal Ave., Pasay City	Sung Hoon Jung	Sales Consultant
QUALITY PRODUCTS & SERVICE INC. Km. 23 West Service Road, Bldg. 6, Sumblest Compound, Cupang, Muntinlupa City	Ayman Abdel Alim Abdalla	Business Unit Head Consultant (For Middle East Source Products)
SKY JOURNEY MANAGEMENT & CONSULTANCY SERVICES, INC. 10/F R. Magsaysay Center, Roxas Blvd., Manila	Yong Min Kim	Travel Consultant
HYATT HOTEL & CASINO MANILA (NEW COAST HOTEL) 1588 Pedro Gil St., cor. M.H. del Pilar, Malate, Manila	Hang Sang Chan	Chinese Chef
FORMOSTAR GARMENT (PHILS.) CO., INC. 105 M. Alvarez, Talon V, Las Pinas City	Jundong Zhu	Packing / Finishing Technician
PHP MEDICAL DISTRIBUTORS INC. Unit 104 National Tobacco Administration Bldg., Sct. Reyes cor. Panay Ave., Quezon City	Sang Sup Joo	Technical Specialist Consultant
FLUOR DANIEL, INC. – PHILIPPINES 3/F, Asian Star Bldg., Asean Drive, Filinvest, Alabang, Muntinlupa City	Patricio F. Fetizanan	Principal Process Engineer
FLUOR DANIEL, INC. – PHILIPPINES 3/F, Asian Star Bldg., Asean Drive, Filinvest, Alabang, Muntinlupa City	Andrew Robert Humphreys	Workshare Coordinator
ROBINSONS LAND CORPORATION Ortigas Ave., cor. ADB Ave., Quezon City	Songhong Luo	Chinese Interpreter
ROBINSONS LAND CORPORATION Ortigas Ave., cor. ADB Ave., Quezon City	Wai Fung Chu	Chinese Executive Sous Chef
ICAD/FOUNTAIN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL 14 Annapolis St., Northeast Greenhills, San Juan, Metro Manila	Gokay Gecu	Physics Teacher
ICAD/FOUNTAIN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL 14 Annapolis St., Northeast Greenhills, San Juan, Metro Manila	Tamer Baydogan	Computer Teacher
ICAD/FOUNTAIN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL 14 Annapolis St., Northeast Greenhills, San Juan, Metro Manila	Onur Kilicaslan	Computer Teacher
ICAD/FOUNTAIN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL 14 Annapolis St., Northeast Greenhills, San Juan, Metro Manila	Mehmet Arslan	Chemistry Teacher
INTELLIRISK PHILIPPINES, INC. 17/F Tower 2 RCBC Plaza, 6819 Ayala Ave., Makati City	Tuhin Bandyopadhyay	Manager - Operations
INTELLIRISK PHILIPPINES, INC. 17/F Tower 2 RCBC Plaza, 6819 Ayala Ave., Makati City	Sumit Chopra	Manager - Operations
INTELLIRISK PHILIPPINES, INC. 17/F Tower 2 RCBC Plaza, 6819 Ayala Ave., Makati City	Nivedita Chopra	Manager - Operations
YOFRUPHIL FOODS INC. 23 Florida St., Brgy. Wack-Wack, Mandaluyong City	Yeonhui Baek	Sales and Marketing Manager
PHILIPPINE SKY TOP TRAVEL & TOURS CORP. S-303 Ermita Center Bldg., cor. Sta. Monica, 1350 Roxas Blvd., Ermita, Manila	Se Young Jung	President

If you have any information/objection to the above mentioned application/s please communicate with the Regional Director.

f: **LOURDES M. TRASMONTE**
Regional Director

(PDI – February 3, 2007)

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TRADE & INDUSTRY
PHILIPPINES

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SELECTION STEPS

Selection Step	Date	Venue
I. Written Technical Exam		
• Luzon		DTI Makati
• Visayas	14, 15 & 16 of February	DTI Cebu
• Mindanao		DTI Davao
II. Panel Interview	22, 23, 26 & 27 of February	DTI Makati
III. Simulation Exercise	26, 27, 28 of February & 01, 02 of March	DTI Makati
IV. Psychological Appraisal	6, 7, 8 & 9 of March	QC
V. EXCOM Interview	16 March	DTI Makati

Note:

1. Each selection step is a hurdle point. Candidate has to meet the required rating per selection step to be able to proceed to the succeeding activity
2. Specific date per selection step will be pre-assigned to successful candidates
3. Candidates who pass the psychological examination will be scheduled to take the Career Service Professional Eligibility Exam. CSC Examination date will be announced later.

CORE REQUISITES

Education, Relevant Training, Age Limit & Citizenship:

- Bachelor's degree preferably in Business, Economics, International Studies, Law and Marketing. (*Master's Degree is an advantage*)
- At least 25 years old and not more than 35 years of age upon appointment by the President of the Philippines
- Filipino Citizen with unimpaired integrity
- Preferably a Civil Service Professional Eligible or Board Passer of any related Philippine Licensure Examination (e.g. Bar, Accountancy, Engineering etc)
- Eight (8) hours relevant training

Experience and Skills:

- At least four (4) years commercial & supervisory experience in marketing, banking and finance, economics
- Excellent communication and presentation skill both written and oral
- Fluency in English and preferably other major foreign languages
- Highly developed IT skills

Knowledge of:

- Current international and local economic issues and business developments
- Trade and investment policies
- Export and investment marketing
- Business counseling
- Market research methodologies

Ability to:

- Recognize and identify entrepreneurial opportunities/prospects
- Market the Philippines as a viable source of products and services and as an investment location for international businesses
- Think analytically and exercise judgment
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- Manage workload under a small office environment but to imbibe strong "esprit de corps"
- Create a good impression, command attention and respect and show an air of confidence
- Be a teamplayer yet able to work independently

Secure application forms from:
Human Resource Development Service
6/F Trade & Industry Building,
361 Sen. Gil Puyat Ave., Makati City

Or
Visit www.business.gov.ph
for downloadable forms

Applications sent through regular mail or e-mail should be received by HRDS on
09 February 2007, 5:00 p.m.

Applications received after February 9 will not be accepted, unless posted before February 9.

Submit application to:
The Assistant Secretary
Human Resource Development Service
6/F Trade & Industry Building,
361 Sen. Gil Puyat Ave., Makati City
E-mail: hrds@dti.gov.ph

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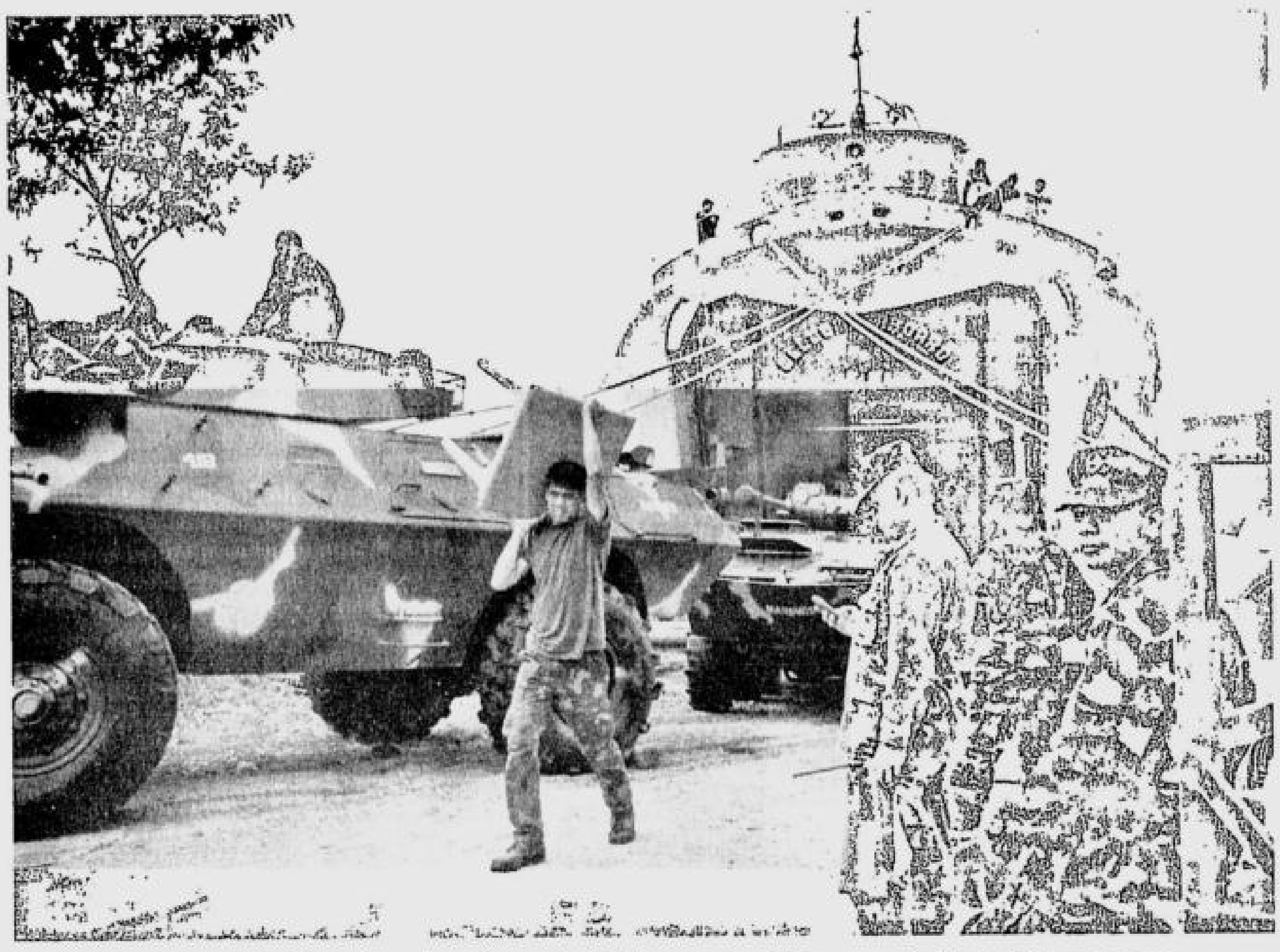
Marines return to Basilan vs Sayyaf



MARINES move in with their tanks and equipment in Basilan, a return that was met with skepticism by some residents.

JULIE ALIPALA/INQUIRER MINDANAO

ISABELA CITY, BASILAN—THE Philippine Marines continued its deployment here as the Army's pullout has been completed.

An additional batch of Marines, numbering about 700, disembarked from a Navy ship, which docked at the shorelines of Barangay Tabuk here shortly before 6 a.m. on Wednesday from Baloi, Lanao del Norte.

Not a single government official was around to welcome the arriving soldiers.

But some Badjaos tried to sell their fresh catch to the incoming soldiers and curious children occasionally giggled as they watched from their neighborhood.

The elements of the Marine Battalion Landing Team 6 (MBLT6) did not mind the absence of a welcoming party as they unloaded their armored vehicles, transport trucks and jeeps and other combat equipment.

Some of them also brought along their farm animals like ducks, chickens and turkeys.

A soldier said food is one of the most important requirements of the manhunt against the Abu Sayyaf and their allies from the Jemaah Islamiyah.

Lt. Col. Max Ballesteros, operations officer of the 1st Marine Brigade, said two more battalions will be arriving in the next few days to continue the Army's job.

With the recent arrival, the number of Marines here is now over 1,000.

"Its part of our challenge here," Col. Ramiro Alivio, 1st Marine Brigade commander, said as he surveyed the dilapidated base, which the Army's 103rd Infantry Brigade had left.

Lt. Col. Jessie Bugayong, MBLT6 commander, said the Marines are not actually strangers to this province.

He said this was one of their areas of deployment in the 1980s.

"So there is no need for our men to adjust because traditionally, Basilan belongs to the coverage of the Philippine Marines. It's like returning to your native town," he said.

But it appears the "homecoming" was not a welcome sight for many residents of the province.

Basilan Bishop Martin Jumoad told the INQUIRER that 90 percent of the people of the city alone, where the Marines would be encamping, are "strongly opposing the return of the troops."

Jumoad said the people of Basilan have not forgotten the days when the Marines sowed terror instead of protecting them.

Manny Muarip, a community leader, said he fears that the return of the Marines would widen the gap between Muslims and Christians.

"The Army was doing a good job, such as bridging better relationships. As for the Marines, why do they have to return here?" Muarip commented.

But Bugayong said those opposing their arrival should give them a chance.

He said majority of his troops are natives of Basilan and that they can easily interact with the people. *Julie S. Alipala, Inquirer Mindanao*

Ex-Subic chief says BCDA, bank squabble delaying land payment

CLARK SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE—Farmers who own pieces of property that are on the path of the Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway project (SCTEx) are victims of an "interagency" squabble between the Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA) and the Land Bank of the Phils., a former top official of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA) said yesterday.

Felicito Payumo, in a phone interview, said the farmers have already paid for the lands they obtained through the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law.

But Narciso Abaya, president of the BCDA, said he won't be pressured into paying for lands that have no clean titles.

"We risk [facing] cases from the Commission on Audit. We have to follow the rule of law [in acquiring right-of-way for government projects]," Abaya said in a phone interview in reaction to the demand for payments by Payumo on behalf of three farmers in Dinalupihan, Bataan.

Abaya said the BCDA has the money and is ready to pay when the farmers produce the certificate of full payment and release of real estate mortgage from the LandBank.

Payumo, in a phone interview, said the original landowner filed a just compensation case that contested the acquisition price set by the Department of Agrarian Reform.

"The LandBank wants the BCDA to sign a deed of commitment that BCDA would pay [the bank] if the valuation determined by the court is higher than the acquisition price by the government. BCDA has not done so," said Payumo.

"So, it's a case of interagency squabble between lawyers of BCDA and LandBank. Caught in the grip of this gridlock are the farmers," he said in a statement.

He said the farmers have been waiting for payments for more than two years.

Abaya denied that the BCDA has already prepared a draft of the deed of commitment.

Payumo said it was Rex Chan, BCDA vice president for operations, who claimed that the draft has been sent to the LandBank, which a bank official denied.

Abaya said his agency has prepared a manager's check for the three parcels of land totaling 1.4 hectares. The BCDA filed an expropriation case on Thursday.

"The expropriation case was meant to break the impasse with the former owner of the land," Abaya said.

He said the Allied Bank, the land's former owner, was demanding just compensation.

"Let me categorically say that whatever amount the court dictates, we are ready to [pay] even today," Abaya said in a separate statement.

"As president of BCDA, I am on top of the situation, including this case. Since 2005, there was no letup on our quest for a resolution of this problem," he said. *Tonette Orejas, Inquirer Central Luzon*

DOJ backs down from junking case vs poachers

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY—THE DEPARTMENT of Justice yesterday ordered the provincial prosecutor here to suspend the withdrawal of cases filed against the 24 Chinese poachers caught off Mangsee Island in Balabac, Palawan last October.

Provincial Prosecutor Allen Ross Rodriguez said he received the DOJ order in the middle of the hearing on a motion to withdraw the charges against the 24 Chinese poachers at the sala of Regional Trial Court Branch 52 Judge Toribio Ilao.

The new DOJ order reflects a change of heart of Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez, who, on Jan. 22, ordered Rodriguez to file the motion to drop the cases against the Chinese poachers.

Rodriguez said he received the order from Prosecutor Benny Nicdao, chief of staff of Gonzalez, through a text message and later through a mobile phone call.

The text message read in the court stated that the "provincial prosecutor should suspend motion to withdraw criminal information pending the motion for reconsideration filed by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) in the DOJ."

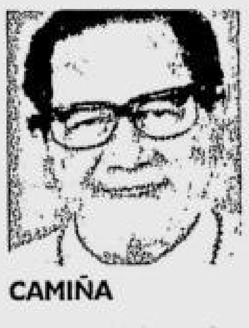
Ilao gave the provincial prosecutor and the counsel of the Chinese 10 days within which to submit their positions.

Two cases of poaching and use of explosives and noxious substance were filed against the Chinese whose boat yielded dynamited fish and live reef fish, when they were caught off Balabac, 273 km south of Puerto Princesa.

The DOJ order came as a total surprise to Rodriguez, who was expecting the "worse."

"It was a total surprise to us, we are not expecting it," he said after the hearing. *Robert Bagalay, Inquirer Southern Luzon*

Bishop, critic of gov't, dies



CAMIÑA

DIGOS CITY—BISHOP emeritus Generoso Camiña, an outspoken critic of many government economic policies, died of complications from liver cancer at the San Pedro Hospital in Davao City around 6 a.m. yesterday.

Camiña, 75, was the first bishop of Digos when it finally became a diocese in 1980.

Fondly called Gene by acquaintances, Camiña propelled the diocese into one of the most active units of the Catholic Church in the Philippines.

On Aug. 22, 1989, Camiña founded the Apostolic Daughters of Mary (ADM), a congregation of nuns doing what he loved most: Working with the poor.

ADM sisters figured in many humanitarian works in the provinces and were very active in relief assistance during the onslaught of the El Niño phenomenon in 1998.

Sister Maria Delia Montefolca, ADM, said Camiña was to fly to Manila for a checkup on Jan. 29 but his conditioned worsened.

He was brought to the San Pedro Hospital instead and died while being treated by his doctors. *Eldie S. Aguirre, Inquirer Mindanao*

PASIG RIVER REHABILITATION COMMISSION
5th Floor, DENR Main Building, Visayas Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City
Telephone Nos. +632 926 6449; Fax +632 926 5233
Web Address **http://prrc.gov.ph**; E-mail Address: prrc@tri-isys.com

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID
Republic of the Philippines
Supply and Installation of Stand-By Generator Sets for the Pasig River Ferry Stations

The PRRC, through the General Appropriations Act of 2007 intends to apply the sum of **Eight million forty six thousand seven hundred four pesos and 32/100 centavos (P8,046,704.32) being the Approved Budget for the Contract to payments under the contract for Supply and Installation of Stand-by generator Sets (PRFS-SG-01).** Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid Opening.

The PRRC now invites Bids from eligible Bidders for Supply and Installation of Stand-By Generator Sets for the Pasig River Ferry Stations (PRFS-SG-01). Delivery of GOODS is required by **April 10, 2007**. The description of an eligible Bidder is contained in section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB.

Activity for the Whole Contract Package
Supply and Installation of 50KVA SG for Guadalupe Ferry Station
Supply and Installation of 25KVA SG for Escolta Ferry Station
Supply and Installation of 35KVA SG for Sta. Ana Ferry Station
Supply and Installation of 30KVA SG for Hulo Ferry Station
Supply and Installation of 40KVA SG for Lambingan Ferry Station
Supply and Installation of 35KVA SG for PUP Ferry Station
Supply and Installation of 25KVA SG for Plaza Mexico Ferry Station
Supply and Installation of 30KVA SG for Valenzuela Ferry Station

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act," and is restricted to Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organizations of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183) and subject to Commonwealth Act 138 (C.A. 138). Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB. The bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine responsiveness of the bid to technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure.

Interested Bidders may obtain further information from **Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission** and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission
Deputy Executive Director, Atty. Zoilo L. Andin, Jr.
5F DENR Main Building, Visayas Ave., Diliman, Quezon City

A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested Bidders from **February 10-17, 2007, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.** at the address below upon submission of Letter of Intent and upon payment of a nonrefundable fee in the amount of **THIRTEEN THOUSAND PESOS (Php 13,000.00)**. The method of payment shall be made only upon a certification by the Head of the Procuring Entity to the effect that the Goods have been rendered or delivered in accordance with the terms of the Contract and have been duly inspected and accepted. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.

The *PRRC-IABAC will* hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested parties at the Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission - **PRRC Conference Room, 5/F DENR Main Building, Visayas Ave., Diliman, Quezon City** on February 13, 2007, 10:00 a.m.

Bids and eligibility requirements must be delivered to the address below on or before February 26, 2007, 1:00 p.m. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security in the form and amount stated in the Bid Data Sheet or an equivalent amount in a freely convertible currency. Late Bids shall not be accepted

Bid opening shall be on February 26, 2007, 1:30 p.m. at the **PRRC Conference Room**. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend at the address below.

The PRRC-IABAC reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission
Deputy Executive Director Atty. Zoilo L. Andin, Jr.
5F DENR Main Building, Visayas Ave., Diliman, Quezon City
Tel. No. +632 926 6449
Fax: +632 926 5233

(Sgd.) Atty. ZOILO L. ANDIN
BAC-Chairperson

(PDI - Feb 3 & 10, 2007)

Republic of the Philippines
PROVINCE OF ORIENTAL NEGROS
Municipality of Siaton
SIATON BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE

INVITATION TO BID
JBIC LOAN PH-P200
SECONDARY EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVEMENT PROJECT
SCHOOL FACILITIES DEVELOPMENT

1. The Government of the Philippines (GOP) through the Department of Education has received an Official Development Assistance (ODA) Loan from the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) towards the financing of the Secondary Education Development and Improvement Project (SEDIP) last December 28, 1999. It is intended that part of the proceeds of this loan, together with the GOP counterpart funds, will be applied to eligible payments under the contract for the construction of different school buildings in the Municipality of Siaton as follows:

Project Description	School	Location
One Storey, Library Bldg w/ Guidance and Faculty Room One Storey, Science Laboratory Bldg. One Storey, Industrial Arts Bldg. One Storey, Home Economics Bldg. One Storey, 4-Classroom Bldg. w/ Toilet	Candugay NHS	Barangay Candugay, Siaton

2. Disbursement of the ODA Loan from JBIC will be subject, in all respects, to the terms and conditions of Loan Agreement PH-P200. No party other than the Department of Education shall derive any rights from the Loan Agreement or have any claims to loan proceeds.
3. The Local Government Unit of Siaton now invites sealed bids from eligible bidders to enter into contract based on award for the Construction of School Buildings in Candugay NHS which is envisioned to be completed within One hundred twenty (120) calendar days.
4. Bidding will be conducted in accordance with the JBIC's Local Competitive Bidding procedures and is open to all Bidder's from eligible source countries as defined in the *"Guidelines for Procurement under JBIC Loans."*
5. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested bidders upon submission of the Letter of Intent (LOI) and payment of a non-refundable fee of Php 2,000.00 from the SEDIP-NPMO, DepED Division of Oriental Negros and the BAC Office of Siaton. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the bidder or his authorized representative, which will be issued on **February 1, 2007** and not later than **February 8, 2007; 5:00 PM.**
6. The BAC-Siaton will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all Eligible Bidders on February 12, 2007; 9:00 AM at the BAC Office of Siaton.
7. Eligible Bidders must submit their Bids at the BAC Office, Siaton on or before February 23, 2007; 9:00 AM. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid security in either of the following forms; cash, certified check, cashier's check, bank draft, irrevocable letter of credit or a bank guarantee in an amount equivalent to:

School	Project Description	Bid Security
Candugay NHS	1-Storey Science Laboratory Building 1-Storey Industrial Arts Building 1-Storey Home Economics Building 1-Storey 4-Classroom Bldg. w/ Toilet 1-Storey Library Bldg. w/ Guidance and Faculty Room	Php 219,250.00

8. Late Bids will not be accepted. The Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) will only be disclosed by BAC after the opening of bids in accordance with the Instruction to Bidders. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidder or its authorized representatives who choose to attend the opening of Bids.
9. JBIC requires that all bidders and contractors, as well as the LGU and DepED-SEDIP, shall observe the highest standard of ethics during the procurement and execution of contracts. In pursuance of this policy, JBIC:

a). will reject a proposal for award if it determines that the bidder recommended for award has engaged in corrupt or fraudulent practices in competing for the contract in question;

b.) will recognize a contractor as ineligible, for a stated period of time if it, at any time determines that the contractor has engaged in corrupt or fraudulent practices in competing for, or in executing another contract financed in part from JBIC ODA Loans or other Japanese ODA.

10. The BAC of Siaton reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

(Sgd.) DARIO ARBOLADO
BAC Chairman

(PDI - Jan. 26 & Feb. 3, 2007)

INQUIRER Visayas

E-mail: inq_cebu@inquirer.com.ph
Website: www.inquirer.net/regions
Editor Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Edralyn L. Benedicto

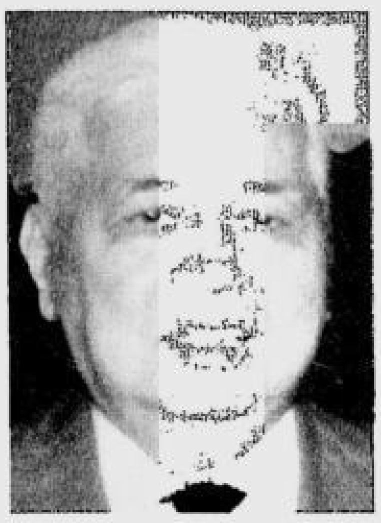
Families rule Eastern Visayas politics

By Vicente S. Labro
Tacloban City

BLOOD IS THICKER THAN POlitical relations, at least in Eastern Visayas where politics continues to be a family affair and nearly all of the opposing politicians belong to parties "friendly" with Malacañang.

BANKER lawyer Ferdinand Martin Romualdez

ALFRED, son of Alfredo "Bejo" Romualdez


KOKOY Romualdez

LEYTE Rep. Remedios Petilla

Although prominent politicians in the region have yet to file their certificates of candidacy, the ongoing political posturing shows who will run in the May 14, 2007 elections.

The derby to watch is in Leyte, where two political clans are at loggerheads over who will reign in the province for at least the next three years.

Two scions of the Romualdezes and an in-law are girding for public office in the first congressional district in a bid to continue the family political tradition in Leyte.

Young banker-lawyer Ferdinand Martin Romualdez, son of former Gov. Benjamin "Kokoy" Romualdez, who ruled Leyte for about a decade during the reign of his brother-in-law President Ferdinand Marcos, has been visiting towns and attending gatherings in the past two months.

Martin, who was recently sworn in as district chair of President Macapagal-Arroyo's Kabalikat ng Malayang Pilipino (Kampi), is said to be seeking the congressional seat of the first district (Babatngon, Sta. Fe, Palo, Tanauan, Tolosa, and Alangalang, San Miguel and Tacloban City).

His cousin, former Leyte Rep. Alfred Romualdez, is reportedly set on replacing his father, Tacloban Mayor Alfredo "Bejo" Romualdez, who is now on his third and last term, by running for city mayor.

Alfred had served as congressman of the first district from 1998 to 2001, after the one-year term in Congress of his aunt, former first lady Imelda Romualdez Marcos, who had sought but later given way in the presidential race of 1998. However, he lost in his reelection bid in 2001 to broadcast journalist Ted Failon.

Alfred's wife Christina Gonzales Romualdez, herself a daughter of a prominent politician in San Juan, Metro Manila, is said to be seeking a seat in the city council.

The Romualdezes may eventually field a gubernatorial candidate from among their clan. In the past weeks, Kokoy has been roaming the province, trying to rebuild old political ties and talking with a new breed of politicians for a tieup.

But nobody seems to be sure whether the gubernatorial candidate, if the family would field one, would be Bejo, Kokoy, Imelda or Kokoy's son Phillip who, many believed, was groomed by his father to run for governor before the 1986 Edsa Revolution scotched that dream.

PRESIDENTIAL legal adviser and former Rep. Sergio Apostol

NORTHERN Samar Gov. Raul Daza

Formidable foes

The formidable foes of the Romualdezes are those belonging to the Loreto-Petilla clan, a sub-group of the prominent Veloso clan. The Loreto-Petilla group has ruled the province for nearly 20 years, after replacing the Romualdezes who lost political power when the dictator Ferdinand Marcos and the Romualdezes were ousted in 1986.

In 1995, Remedios "Matin" Loreto Petilla replaced her husband, lawyer Leopoldo Petilla, who has been vice governor and governor, when she ran and won the gubernatorial race. Having been reelected twice, she stayed in the Capitol for nine consecutive years.

Due to the term limitation, she sought the congressional seat in the first district in 2004 and won.

Matin's son, Carlos Jericho or "Icot," a political neophyte then, ran for governor under the banner of Lakas-NPC in 2004 and won. He defeated lawyer Sergio Apostol, then a three-term congressman and now the President's legal adviser.

> Although prominent politicians in the region have yet to file their certificates of candidacy, the ongoing political posturing shows who will run in the May 14, 2007 elections

Governor Petilla, who is seeking reelection, was recently sworn in as member of the Lakas-CMD, the political party of his mother and politician-relatives.

Representative Petilla's sister, Rep. Carmen Loreto Cari (fifth district), and nephews, provincial Board Member Carlo Loreto and Baybay Mayor Carlo Cari, are also expected to run for reelection or a new post.

The Petilla empire, built over decades in power, seems to be a formidable political opponent. But some "cracks" may jeopardize their hopes of winning.

In the fourth district, two-term Rep. Eufrocino "Dodong" Codilla Sr. and his son, Ormoc City Mayor Eric Codilla, will be seeking reelection, while another son will reportedly run for mayor in Kananga, Leyte.

New alliances

In the past elections, the Petillas had supported the Lardizabal-Locsin clan in Ormoc, which has blood relations to the Petillas through the Veloso lineage.

But since 2001, the Codillas have gotten the upper hand. Dodong and his politician-sons are now reportedly being wooed by the Romualdezes to support the latter's political plans.

In the second district, two-term Rep. Trinidad "Ebbie" G. Apostol, wife of the presidential legal adviser, and daughter Anlie, the incumbent mayor of Carigara town, are expected to seek reelection under the Lakas-CMD.

Despite having trounced the Apostol patriarch in the past gubernatorial race, the Petillas are reportedly seeking an alliance with the Apostols, being party mates. But there seems to be a hitch, particularly in the selection of official candidates for mayor and other local posts as the two groups have their respective men and women to support.

On the other hand, the Romualdezes are also trying to have political ties with the Apostols. With the Romualdezes gaining ground in the first district and expecting a favorable political development in the fourth district, the decision of the Apostols on who to support will make or break the Romualdezes' desire to field a gubernatorial candidate.

Elsewhere in the region, political clans are also calling the shots, whatever political parties they may belong.

For instance, in Southern Leyte, it has been reported that three-term Gov. Rosette Y. Lerias would be replaced by her husband Victor, while Rep. Roger Mercado would support the gubernatorial bid of his brother, three-term Maasin City Mayor Damian Mercado.

Lerias is with the Nationalist People's Coalition while the Mercados are Lakas-CMD stalwarts in the province. Despite party differences, the Leriases and the Mercados were political allies in past elections. At present, they are both supportive of the President.

Governor Lerias, however, refused to talk about the present political situation, except by saying that negotiations were going on.

Political circles

Political negotiations are also going on in Northern Samar, where Gov. Raul Daza is reportedly backing the congressional bid of his son, incumbent Board Member Paul Daza, while three-term Rep. Harlin Abayon is keen on running for governor.

Governor Daza, who defended then President Joseph Estrada in his impeachment case, is the only known elected official in the region to be anti-Arroyo. He has been a three-term congressman of the first district and is in his second term as governor.

Representative Abayon, who was a three-term governor before he ran and won for three consecutive elections the congressional seat in the first district, now reportedly wants his old post at Capitol. This means that he would be pitted against Daza if the latter seeks reelection. Daza reportedly wanted his son Paul to seek the post to be vacated by Abayon.

In Samar, however, no negotiation is going on between Rep. Catalino Figueroa and Gov. Milagrosa T. Tan. Figueroa is said to be all set to run for reelection while his wife Neliptha will contest Tan's reelection bid.

But Tan wants her daughter Sharee Ann, a neophyte, to oppose Figueroa's reelection bid as she runs for reelection as governor.

In Eastern Samar, three-term Rep. Marcelino Libanan (Lakas-CMD) will not be running for any position. He will field his wife Elda as candidate for the lone congressional seat of the province.

Lording in Biliran

It seems that only the Espinas of the island-province of Biliran will not have strong opponents. The family patriarch, Naval Mayor Gerardo "Gerry" Espina, has ruled the province for more than a decade now. Before he ran for mayor in the capital town, he was a three-term congressman representing the lone district of the province.

Also holding political power are his sons, Rep. Gerardo Espina Jr., Gov. Rogelio Espina, and Mayor Rodolfo Espina of Kawayan town.

Amid the hullabaloos pervading the region, the fact remains that many of the people whom the politicians vow, or have vowed, to serve are still living below poverty. But that is another story.

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CEBU PACIFIC
It's time everyone flies.

Beermen, Kings near title clash

More Sports stories on A21 to 24

RACELA: A little quickness left.

GAMES TOMORROW (*Araneta Coliseum*)
4:05 p.m.—Ginebra vs Talk 'N Text
6:20 p.m.—Red Bull vs San Miguel

By Francis Ochoa

SAN MIGUEL BEER PULLED off a crucial victory last night, storming away steadily from Red Bull with each passing quarter to forge a 111-82 rout in Game 5 of the Philippine Cup semifinal series at the Araneta Coliseum.

And it was with just little of the new gameface coach Chot Reyes talked so often about.

Instead, it was mostly a throwback to the old San Miguel days of domination: Clinical, a lot of tough defense, a little of post offense, a lot of Danny Seigle and a little of Olsen Racela.

The result? A 3-2 edge in a drama-filled best-of-seven series that gave the Beermen a twice-to-beat advantage in the race to one of two finals slot of what is regarded as the league's premier tournament.

"Basketball is not really all about being physical," said Racela, the long-time skipper of a highly-successful San Miguel run at the turn of the millennium. He proved his point with three triples in a mild third quarter run to give the Beermen control, 68-57, 4:08 to play before the fourth.

"Sometimes, you have to use a little of your mental strengths, a little quickness," said the veteran playmaker, who flaunted a lot of spring in a pair of 36-year-old legs that refused to pass the torch to heir apparent LA Tenorio just yet.

"There's still a little quickness left in me," he added.

There was a little bit of a throwback also in the second game. Down by three in the final 49 seconds of the match, Barangay Ginebra showed it still had its old never-say-die spirit, pulling off two big stops on the way to a pulsating 108-105 victory over Talk 'N Text.

The Kings also took a 3-2 series lead in their half of the semifinal bracket despite throwing away a 21-point first half lead.

"They made a great run and we really had to gut it out in the end to pull this off," said Kings coach Jong Uichico. "But we never gave up. We simply made sure we executed and got some stops in the end.

Two free throws by Sunday Salvacion trimmed the deficit to a point and the Kings finally took the lead for good in transition after Asi Taulava missed a hook and Hatfield tapped the ball to Jayjay Helterbrand, who fed a streaking Mark Caguioa for a layup, 106-105, 17.7 ticks remaining.

"They won Game 2 with a pick-and-roll off Jimmy Alapag so we had to be prepared for that in the last play," said Uichico.

And true enough, the Phone Pals again went to the pick-and-roll that the Kings were prepared for and Alapag ended up fumbling with the leather, leading to the error that sealed Ginebra's victory.

The scores:

First Game

SAN MIGUEL 111—Seigle 21, Racela 19, Gonzales 16, Calaguio15, Pena 13, Adducul 10, Ildefonso 10, Hontiveros 3, Espinas 2, Wilson 2, Tenorio 0, Tugade 0.

RED BULL 82—Baguio 19, Valenzuela 16, Fonacier 14, Najorda 9, Alvarez 6, Cruz 5, Pennisi 5, Sharma 3, Robinson 3, Villanueva 2.

Quarters: 21-15, 49-41, 74-64, 111-82

Second Game

GINEBRA 108—Caguioa 31, Hatfield 21, Helterbrand 15, Salvacion 10, Reavis 8, Holper 6, Mamaril 6, Tubid 5, Macapagal 4, Abarrientos 2.

TALK 'N TEXT 105—Washington 22, Taulava 21, Cardona 19, Ritualo 13, Carey 11, Alapag 11, Belano 5, De Ocampo 3, Fran 0, Pablo 0.

Quarters: 35-20, 61-45, 87-80, 108-105

World Wide Fund warns of food shortage in RP

By Norman Bordadora

THE WORLD WIDE FUND FOR NAture has warned that scarcity of food resources is one of the effects of global warming even for a country rich in natural resources like the Philippines.

"Food scarcity is a real danger [as] 40 million Filipinos rely on the sea for food," WWF-Philippines chief executive officer Lorenzo Tan said yesterday in a statement in anticipation of the fourth assessment report by Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

"Coral bleaching, algal blooms and marine acidification brought about by global warming will definitely take its toll on our declining fisheries," he added.

Tan said serious concerns about freshwater resources would also affect the production of rice, a Filipino staple.

"Rice too, might be in short supply. It takes 4,700 liters of water to produce a kilo of rice. We face a drought this 2007. No water, no rice. No rice, no food," he said.

Heavy toll

In a statement, WWF-Philippines said climate change was already taking its toll on the country's resources as shown by the recent super typhoons that hit the country toward the end of 2006.

"Last year alone, the country was subjected to a slew of destructive storms, floods and droughts. Material damage ran into the billions. The human toll was far greater. Massive waves swept away thousands of homes in Tawi-Tawi, Mindanao and the Visayas," the group said.

"Closer to the capital, Edsa's impermeable billboards lay toppled. And in our very own backyards, century-old trees were ripped apart. Currently the country experiences abnormal weather in the form of a cold spell," it added.

The INQUIRER yesterday reported that frost destroyed P10-million worth of vegetables in the Cordilleras.

Global warming causes changes in the atmospheric patterns that lead to changes in weather patterns such as stronger typhoons and colder than usual temperatures.

Act without delay

"The government must take this opportunity for immediate and positive action to avert the damaging consequences of climate change. Mitigation is only one part of the equation. An adaptation response should be crafted and set in place without delay," said Raf Senga, WWF climate change manager.

"Extreme weather is not some future forecast—it is happening here, now. If we are to make it through this with minimal damage to our country—our government must act now," he added.

Senga said that instead of spending on repairs, the government should adopt a policy of prevention, "a proactive and strategic solution that can effectively deal with the increasing global temperatures caused by rising carbon dioxide levels in the environment."

DOOMSDAY BY CENTURY'S END

'Climate refugees' could reach 200M

PARIS—A DECADE OR SO AGO, GREENS coined the term "climate refugees" to describe the future victims of global warming.

Today, experts say such refugees may already number in the millions and could reach 200 million by century's end, stoking tensions and potential for conflict.

They point to Inuit communities literally undercut by melting ice in North America and Greenland, the thirsty people around central Africa's fast-shrinking Lake Chad, and the tens of thousands displaced from New Orleans by Hurricane Katrina.

In the future, these ranks could be swollen by refugees fleeing flooded homes, parched farmland or wrecked economies, from small island states in the Pacific to tropical Africa and the Mediterranean rim.

"The issue of environmental refugees promises to rank as one of the foremost human crises or our time," said Norman Myers, an Oxford University professor.

What constitutes a refugee can stoke emotional debate.

Critics of the term say it is a politically-charged misnomer, liable to hype or inaccuracy.

Climate refugees, they argue, should not be confused with people who flee their homes because of ecological stress caused by over-population, pollution, abuse of freshwater or other acts of greed, ill judgement or bad planning.

Katrina

In the case of Katrina, scientists acknowledge a single extreme weather event cannot by itself be pinned to a long-term phenomenon, although they also point out that warmer seas provide raw fuel to make hurricanes more vicious.

But they also say that global warming is already amplifying environmental problems in many countries—and in the future, it will almost certainly help to push vulnerable communities over the edge.

"There is going to be a lot of population movement linked to climate," said Thomas Downing, director of the Stockholm Environment Institute in Oxford.

"Not all will be permanent refugees, but when you add climate to other forces that push people beyond the capacity to cope, the numbers will increase."

Forced migration

A Red Cross and Red Crescent study in 2000 said 25 million people had left their homes because of environmental stress, roughly as many as the refugees from armed conflict.

Myers, one of the leading experts on the link between climate change and forced migration, says the number could double by 2010 and reach as high as 200 million "once global warming kicks in."

For fragile island nations such as Tuvalu in the South Pacific and the Maldives in the Indian Ocean, global warming poses a triple threat.

Warmer seas spell a threat to the coral upon which islanders depend to attract both fish and tourists; decreasing rainfall threatens drinking water supplies; and higher sea levels pose a threat by storm flooding or inundation.

In the densely populated flood plains of Bangladesh, rising seas will not only ruin fertile regions but stoke the storm surges that periodically ravage the low-lying nation. *AFP*

UN report says global warming unstoppable

From page A1

Scientists do worry that world leaders would take that message in the wrong way and throw up their hands, Trenberth said. That would be wrong, he said. Instead, the scientists urged leaders to reduce emissions and also adapt to a warmer world with wilder weather.

"The point here is to highlight what will happen if we don't do something and what will happen if we do something," co-author Jonathan Overpeck at University of Arizona said. "I can tell if you will decide not to do something the impacts will be much larger than if we do something."

Trenberth said the world was paying more attention to scientists now than in previous warnings in 1990, 1995 and 2001. "The tension is more now," he said.

"Warming of the climate system is unequivocal, as is now evident from observations of increases in global average air and ocean temperatures, widespread melting of snow and ice, and rising global mean sea level," the report said.

The head of the panel, Indian climatologist Rajendra Pachauri, called it a "very impressive document that goes several steps beyond previous research." A senior US government scientist, Susan Solomon, said as the report was released, "There can be no question that the increase in greenhouse gases is dominated by human activities."

The report said man-made emissions of greenhouse gases could already be blamed for these current problems: Fewer cold days, hotter nights, killer heat waves, floods and heavy rains, devastating droughts, and an increase in hurricane and tropical storm strength (particularly in the Atlantic Ocean).

Rising temperature

And if you think it is bad now, the harmful effects during the 21st century "would very likely be larger than those observed during the 20th century," the report said.

The Earth's surface temperatures would likely rise between 1.8 Celsius to 4 C (3.2 F to 7.2 F) and sea levels increase 18 cm to 59 cm (7.1 inches to 23.2 inches) by 2100, the report concluded.

The scientists also predicted increasingly intense storms, heat waves and heavy rains in the decades to come.

The impact of pouring greenhouse gases into the atmosphere would cause serious climate disruptions "for more than a millennium," the IPCC said.

Storms more intense

Sea rises, the report notes, are predicted to shrink both the Arctic and Antarctic, and in some projections "Arctic late summer ice disappears almost entirely by the latter part of the 21st century."

"It is likely that that future tropical cyclones"—similar to the one that devastated New Orleans—"will become more intense, with large peak wind speeds and heavy precipitation," it said.

Environmental pressure groups responded to the report by calling for urgent international action to cut greenhouse gas emissions.

World crisis

Friends of the Earth said the world now faced a "crisis," and the WWF International conservation group said governments must now "slash emissions." Greenpeace warned the "window for action is narrowing fast."

"The IPCC report embodies an extraordinary scientific consensus that climate change is already upon us and that human activities are the cause," said WWF International director general James Leape.

"It is a clarion call to governments to act urgently to slash emissions," he added in a statement.

Jan Kowalzig, climate and energy campaigner for Friends of the Earth, said "The IPCC report scientifically confirms the extent of this man-made crisis already hitting people around the world and makes bleak predictions for the future."

He added: "We can no longer afford to ignore growing and compelling warnings from the world's leading experts."

WWF and Friends of the Earth urged the European Union, at a summit next month, to take a leading role in international efforts to control greenhouse gas emissions.

Kowalzig said EU leaders must order a 30-percent emissions reduction target "which would be just enough to avert the worst of climate change."

Lights out in Europe

On Thursday night, before the report was published, the lights went out at major tourist attractions across western Europe for five minutes, including the Eiffel Tower and Rome's Colosseum, to raise awareness about climate change.

The normally glittering nighttime view of France's most famous attraction was plunged into darkness if only for a few minutes as part of an environmental campaign and dubbed "five minutes' break for the planet."

WWF said governments must ensure that the next UN Climate Conference in Bali was a success. Hans Verolme, head of the WWF global climate change program, said it must set a "tight time frame for negotiating new cuts in emissions within a next Kyoto Agreement that will also promote clean investments." *AFP, AP*

Macho nature blamed for Ebdane's short fuse

From page A1

newly installed Defense Secretary Hermogenes Ebdane Jr., and stressed that soldiers would not be tapped to transport ballots and election paraphernalia.

Ernesto Carolina, defense undersecretary for civilian, veteran and reserve affairs, said Ebdane had no intention of amending an Oct. 12 memorandum of agreement (MOA) between the DND and the Commission on Elections that bars soldiers from election duties.

"[Armed Forces of the Philippines] units can be requested to act as escorts when police security is not enough, but they will not be the ones transporting [the ballots]," Carolina said.

Carolina sought out reporters to clarify Ebdane's remarks at his first press briefing as defense chief on Thursday. But he did not apologize for Ebdane's outburst during the briefing.

"We have different actuations. To some people, it's a normal actuation. There are those who react fast," Carolina said.

Being Ilonggo

"*Ganon talaga yon* (That's how he is)—macho," he said of Ebdane.

The two men are 1970 graduates of the Philippine Military Academy.

At the Villamor Air Base, where he was guest of honor at the turnover ceremony of the new Air Force commanding general, Maj. Gen. Horacio Tolentino, Ebdane himself said he had better assume the characteristics of the sweet-tempered Ilonggo at his new post.

Ebdane said his flare-up the other day was prompted by having to answer the same questions from the same reporter.

"I said, 'Why not read the MOA yourself?' It's probably in the manner of speaking. Let's just be like the Ilonggo—smiling even when angry," the native of Zambales told reporters in Filipino.

Asked by the INQUIRER if he was a short-tempered man, Ebdane said he had learned to mellow down but that some incidents could rile him.

"I've learned to be patient but sometimes the natural surfaces," he said.

Taking note of the third prohibition in the MOA stating that military personnel are not supposed to handle ballots and election paraphernalia, Ebdane explained his statement about allowing the transport of ballot boxes using Air Force helicopters.

"What we are driving at is, in areas where there is no available transportation, the Comelec has authority, and that all depends on the decision of the AFP chief of staff," Ebdane said.

"Whatever the government or soldiers will do as decided by the Comelec and approved by the AFP chief of staff will be for a noble intention. *Walang ibang iniisip dito* (Nothing else)," he said, apparently referring to election fraud.

Minding his business

Ebdane brushed off criticisms hounding his appointment, particularly on his alleged involvement in the "Hello Garci" election fraud scandal.

He said he would simply concentrate on his job, as much as his critics should focus on theirs: "*Hindi ko na sila pakikialaman.*"

Ebdane appeared in a good mood, almost smiling throughout the ambush interview.

But a little of the "macho" nature showed.

After answering a series of questions, he quipped: "*Ano pang gusto niyong sabihin kong mali* (What other wrong things do you want me to say)?"

Shortly after he assumed his post on Feb. 1, Ebdane told reporters that he found nothing wrong if military planes would be used to transport ballots.

"Remember, it is always the Comelec who has the final say—like, for example, the transfer of the ballots from one province to another. They need the planes. So it is not included in the prohibition [stated in the MOA]," Ebdane said.

He lost his temper when a reporter asked him how allowing troops to transport ballots would affect insulating the military from partisan activities.

"What's your problem?" he snapped, adding: "What's wrong if the Comelec will request the Air Force to transport the ballots from Luzon to Mindanao?"

'Out of context'

Carolina said Ebdane's statement on the MOA had been "taken out of context."

"No, no. It's clear in the MOA that the military is limited to providing escorts [when transporting ballots]. The Secretary is clear on that," he said.

Carolina said troops would not transport election paraphernalia except in "life and death situations" or when ordered by the Comelec.

Before, C-130 military cargo planes and other AFP vehicles and vessels were used to transport election paraphernalia and personnel.

"We don't want that anymore. That's prohibited [under the MOA]," Carolina said.

"Saan man sa mundo,
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ang mga mahal ko."

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Suspected kidnappers fall

1 killed in QC shootout; 4 others nabbed

By Julie M. Aurelio and Miko L. Morelos

ONE SUSPECTED KIDNAPPER WAS KILLED and four others were arrested in Quezon City Thursday afternoon after a brief shootout with intelligence operatives.

Johnny "Jack" Devaras was killed in the shootout in front of the So-en factory at the corner of Araneta Avenue and Baloy Street, Santol, Quezon City.

The National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) presented yesterday to the media the arrested suspected members of the Waray-Waray group.

They were Raul Guimba, alias Randy Sandoval, 33; Reynaldo Llena, 24; Tito Lugnacin alias Diego Grabato, 30; and Rodel Poblete, 27.

Supt. Magtanggol Gatdula, officer in charge of the Quezon City Police District, said the suspects were members of the Waray-Waray syndicate, which was involved in various crimes including kidnap-for-ransom, car theft and robbery.

Deputy Director General for Operations Eric Javier told reporters that operatives received a tip that the group was planning to abduct a wealthy Chinese businessman.

At around 2 p.m. on Thursday, operatives were tailing the suspects' Honda Civic (plate number TNU 897) and a box-type Mitsubishi Lancer (plate number NHS 799) when the alleged kidnappers opened fire.

One of the suspects said it was only Devaras who fired a weapon. The rest dropped to the ground when police closed in on them.

"Jack started to run away. He was the one who fired a gun. We did not hold any weapons," Lugnacin told the INQUIRER in Filipino. Devaras' body was found riddled with bullets.

No one was hurt among the operatives of the Regional Intelligence Division (RID), Regional Special Action Unit (RSAU), and the Anti-Carnapping Unit of the Quezon City Police District.

An investigation showed that the suspects' Honda Civic was stolen from a Richard Rosas on Jan. 19 at the parking lot of the Sunshine Mall, FTI Complex, Taguig City.

Police recovered from the suspects a .45 cal. Llama Minimax pistol with 10 rounds of ammunition, a .38 cal. homemade revolver with four rounds of ammunition, a hand grenade, and a Nokia 3210 cell phone and a Nokia 3315 unit. Devaras was holding the pistol when he was shot. The grenade was found a few yards away.

Javier said the police found in Devaras' possession several IDs indicating he was an intelligence operative of the Philippine Air Force and a reservist of the Philippine Army.

One of the suspects claimed he did not know they were going to kidnap somebody that day.

"I just know Jack (Devaras) because he was introduced to me by my brother. I don't know what he does for a living. He just called me up and told me to wait in front of the So-en factory," Lugnacin said. He added that he drove the box-type Lancer, which he said was bought in Batangas from a certain Cuevas.

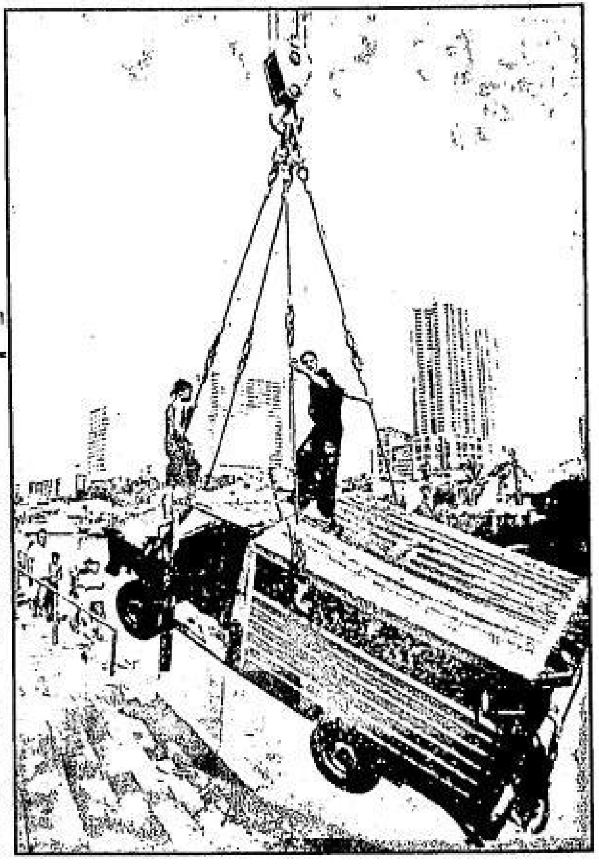
"I was even surprised that Jack brought guns. *Basta ang sabi lang niya sa akin, may trabaho kami*," Lugnacin said. When asked if he knew what Devaras meant by "the job," Lugnacin said he did not have any idea.

Another suspect, Llena, told the INQUIRER he planned to go job-hunting that Thursday, but Devaras told him to go to Araneta Avenue that afternoon.

Llena, a tricycle driver, said he met Devaras in November near Ayala, when he heard him talk in Waray. "I decided to talk to him, after all he was my *kababayan*," Llena, who is from Tacloban, said in Filipino. The two then exchanged text messages. The other suspects also claimed they only knew Devaras through certain contacts.

Lugnacin has jumped bail for a robbery in band case in Dasmariñas, Cavite. Guimba escaped from the National Bilibid Prison in July while being transferred to a hospital for medical treatment. Police are still investigating if Devaras had any pending criminal cases. It was unclear if he was the mastermind.

Meanwhile, charges of illegal possession of firearms and explosives, as well as violations of the Omnibus Election Code and Republic Act No. 6539 or Anti-Carnapping Act, will be filed against the suspects.



BAD FALL A crane recovers this delivery truck that fell into the Pasig River yesterday after its driver lost control of the wheel. *(Story on Page A18)*
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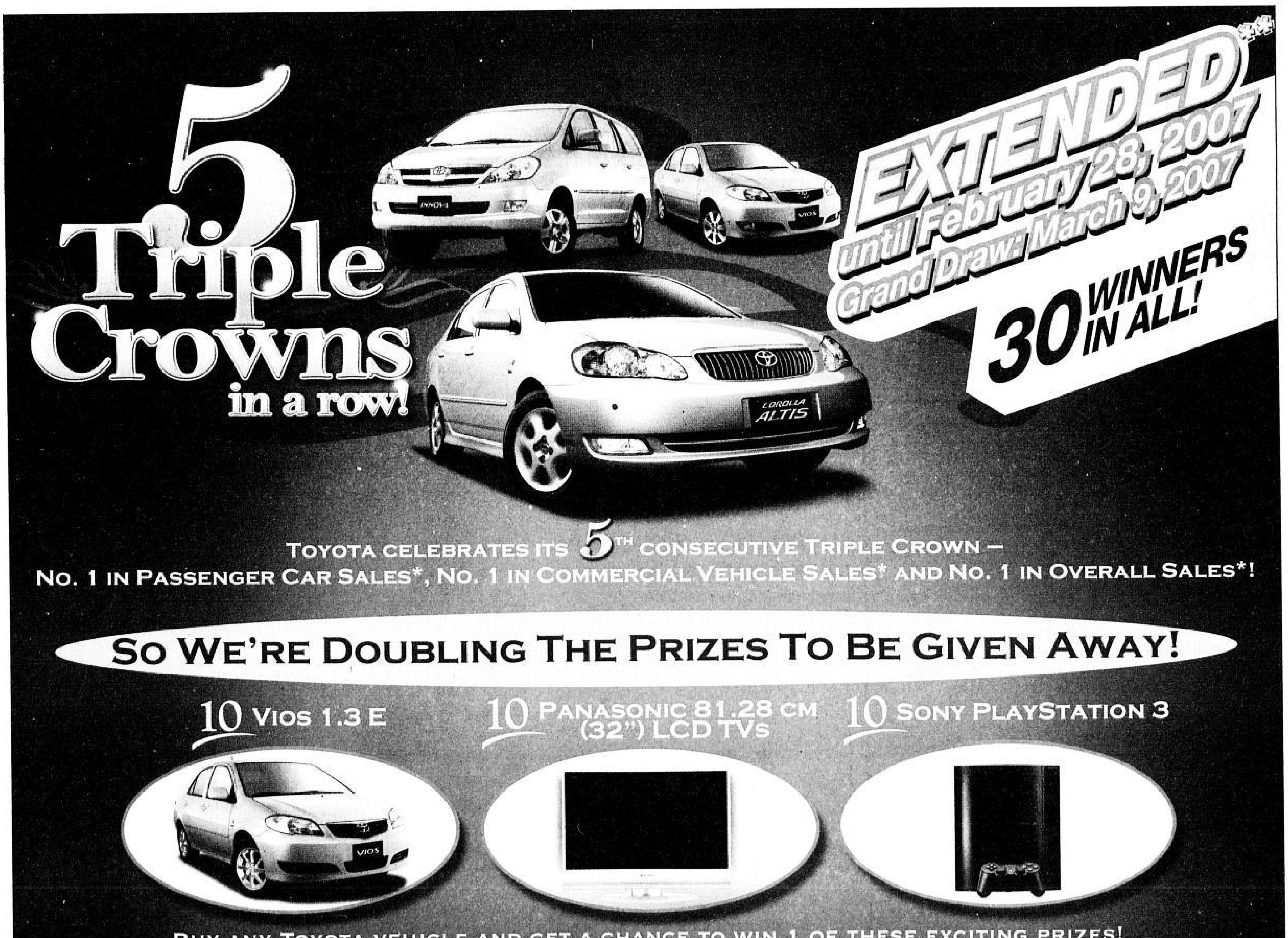

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Pasay City riot could lead to court cases

By Jocelyn R. Uy

THE POLITICAL BATTLE IN Pasay City may be moving to the courts again.

Dismissed Mayor Wenceslao "Peewee" Trinidad and Allan Panaligan, the city's new chief executive, are both considering going to court following a riot at the City Hall on Thursday.

Trinidad, in a press conference yesterday, said his camp was thinking of filing charges against Panaligan, who, he said, one way or the other, had a hand in the violent dispersal the other day.

Criminal and administrative charges were already being prepared against Southern Police District Deputy Director Senior Supt. Jaime Calungsod, Pasay Deputy Director Supt. Carlos de Sagun and several unidentified antiriot policemen for physical injuries and abuse of authority, said Trinidad.

Meanwhile, Panaligan said the city legal department was studying what cases to file against Trinidad, vice mayor Antonino Calixto and councilors Jose Antonio Roxas, Noel Bayona, Lexter Ibay, Arnel Arceo, and some 80 barangay officials and supporters. Charges of sedition and inciting to sedition would most likely be filed, Panaligan said.

"We have to take legal action to stop them from doing these acts," he told the INQUIRER yesterday.

The dismissed officials trooped to City Hall Thursday morning hoping that the Department of Interior and Local Government would grant their request for reinstatement. But the DILG said the request had no legal basis.

The DILG said an amendment to the Ombudsman's rules of procedure allowed the enforcement of a dismissal order pending appeal. Trinidad said the DILG's position on the rule of procedure was applicable only to appointed government employees, not to a duly elected official like him.

Trinidad supporters hurled rocks, trash, bottles and dismantled steel railings when antiriot policemen stopped city officials from entering the building.

Truck falls into river

By Tarra Quismundo

POLICE ARE STILL LOOKING FOR the driver and two passengers of a delivery truck that plunged into the Pasig River early Friday morning. The accident held up traffic along J.P. Rizal Street in Makati City, one of the city's major thoroughfares.

Traffic investigator Insp. Oscar Alicando said public safety officers who arrived at the scene of the accident failed to find the passengers of a charcoal-loaded delivery truck that fell into the river past 7 a.m. yesterday.

There were reports that the three, whose identities are not yet known, were seen boarding a taxi. "We tried looking for them in hospitals, but they were not there. Maybe they were not badly injured," said Alicando.

The truck was traveling eastbound from Edsa to C5 Road when it swerved to another lane and rushed headlong toward a park by the Pasig River. The vehicle then crashed through the railings and fell into the river.

Corrupt judges' parade

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

THERE'S A REGIONAL TRIAL COURT judge in a city south of the Pasig River who is so corrupt that he extorts from both the complainant and the defendant in a civil case. This judge earns millions in the civil cases brought before his court.

The judge demands money from a winning litigant before he issues a decision. And then he demands money from the losing litigant who files a motion for reconsideration.

His shameful activities are well-known among lawyers who defend or prosecute their cases in his sala.

A litigant, who won a favorable decision, was so angered by the double-crossing judge he looked for a hired killer to assassinate the magistrate. But the hot-headed litigant was prevailed upon by his lawyers not to push through with his plan.

Don't be surprised if this two-faced judge is shot dead one of these days.

* * *

Another judge in the same city south of the Pasig River is "religiously" corrupt. This judge starts his court sessions with a long prayer, followed by the reading of a passage from the Bible.

But what do you know. This judge is like the first one I mentioned above. He also engages in *"lagareng-hapon,"* which means "cutting both ways" or collecting from litigants on both sides of the fence.

This priest *manqué* has his son for a sacristan. Junior collects the money from both litigants.

* * *

A Visayas congressman has reportedly gone back to his old habit.

This congressman, whose looks could make the hearts of *colegialas* flutter, is either always late for sessions or absent from them.

The reason? A hangover from a pot session the previous night.

To borrow the language of the *colegialas*: "*Sayang* the congressman, so *gwapo pa naman!*"

* * *

Let's give newly installed Defense Secretary Hermogenes "Jun" Ebdane a chance to prove his worth.

He was a hard worker when he was Philippine National Police (PNP) chief and head of the PNP antikidnapping task force.

There's no hard evidence he was involved in the "Hello Garci" scandal.

What's wrong with having another ex-military man or policeman, like Ebdane, in the defense department, who knows the security establishment inside out?

Would you rather have a civilian coward holding the defense portfolio who would run away from a confrontation with armed rebel soldiers?

* * *

The fact that suspected terrorists who were arrested or killed by security forces in Laguna Thursday belong to the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) makes it a terrorist organization.

This column has been saying all along that the MILF and the Abu Sayyaf are one and the same group, contrary to government claims.

Of course, the government goes with the MILF disowning of the Abu Sayyaf so as not to jeopardize the peace talks with the insurgent group.

The fact is that the Abu Sayyaf is MILF's lost command or dirty tricks department.

Let's not deceive ourselves: the MILF kidnaps and kill innocent civilians through the Abu Sayyaf, and still maintains a clean image in the eyes of the international community.

₱2.85M taken in Pasig heist

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THREE MOTORCYCLE-RIDING ROBBERS took at gunpoint yesterday afternoon P2.85 million in company money in Pasig City.

The daring robbery was the fifth in the city using the same modus operandi in only three months. Three robbers usually prey on customers who had just withdrawn big amounts from a bank.

Company driver Alvin Magdalena, 27, said he and fellow employee Jose Garate, 42, had just withdrawn money at about 2:30 p.m. from the Equitable-PCI Bank Branch on Shaw Boulevard and were on their way back to the head office of the ARRHA Export Business, an exporter of locally made grocery items, in Mandaluyong City. The two were on board a green Mitsubishi Strada.

While stuck in traffic on Shaw Boulevard corner Pioneer Street, two men armed with .45 cal. handguns approached the two and announced a holdup.

Magdalena said he was forced to open the glass window on his side after one of the men aimed his gun at him. Garate said he was forced to get out of the vehicle. The robbers took the backpack filled with cash, got on a blue motorcycle driven by a third man, and fled. Garate told the police the motorcycle did not have a plate number. He refused to tell investigators how much money was taken, but company manager Ramil Magdalena later told police P2.85 million was withdrawn.

METROBRIEFS

Unkindest cut

A BARBER will have to spend 40 years in prison after a Manila court found him guilty in the murder of a barangay chair eight years ago. Judge Vedasto Marco of Manila Regional Trial Court Branch 41 handed down the sentence to Moises Reyes for stabbing to death Danilo Santos. The court also ordered the accused to indemnify the heirs of the victim P255,000 in damages.

Tina G. Santos

Fake fish sauce

THE NATIONAL Bureau of Investigation seized a truckload full of fake fish sauce or "patis" during a raid at Twin Hearts Food Corp. at Dagat-Dagatan Avenue, Caloocan City early this week. Operatives disclosed that the firm was using Lorins Patis labels and Lorenzana Food Corp. logos on their bottles and plastic containers.

Margaux C.Ortiz

Hands off

THE UNITED BF Homes Association Inc. sees no reason why the Parañaque City government should go after their security guards who "encourage" motorists to avail of its entry stickers. Celso Reyes, UBFHAI president, said the association has the right to issue stickers to motorists entering Tirona Street and Concha Cruz Drive as these are not within the jurisdiction of the city.

Jocelyn R. Uy

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NOTICE OF SEARCH AND CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

The Board of Trustees of the Northern Iloilo Polytechnic State College formally and publicly announces that the Search for Presidency of the **NORTHERN ILOILO POLYTECHNIC STATE COLLEGE** is now open. Interested applicants and/or nominees are invited to send their formal applications to the Search Committee chaired by Commissioner Saturnino M. Ocampo, Jr.

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS :

- Must be a Natural born Filipino citizen;
- A holder of an earned doctorate degree in any academic field relevant to the mission and mandate of the College;
- Below 60 years old at the time of application;
- Must have a proven track record as administrator whether in private or public organization for at least five (5) years; and
- Morally upright and has no record of criminal, civil and/or administrative conviction.

Formal application addressed to the Search Committee should be accompanied with:

- Detailed Curriculum Vitae and authenticated/certified supporting documents;
- The applicant's proposed Vision and Thrust for the College within a four-year period;
- Result of the Neuro-Psychiatric Examination accomplished by a competent physician of a government accredited Test Center;
- Medical Certificate of Physical Fitness issued by a government physician;
- Under Oath CSC Form 212; and
- Certificate of **no pending cases.**

Interested applicants and/or those nominated for the position are requested to submit six (6) sets of their formal application and certified supporting documents on or before March 06, 2007 to:

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Tel. No. (02) 636-1690
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Prequalification documents shall be received from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM by the Prequalification, Bids and Awards Committee through its Chairman, MS. MARILOU N. VERGARA at TARELCO II Main Office Building located in San Nicolas, Concepcion, Tarlac, Philippines.

Bid Documents may be obtained from BAC Secretariat upon payment of Php2,000.00 in cash.

Submission of Prequalification Documents – February 05-09, 2007
Issuance of Bid Kit – February 12-16, 2007
Date and Time of Pre-bid Conference – February 16, 2007 at 1:30 PM
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Accredited suppliers previously pre-qualified need only to update their files with TARELCO II.

Tarelco II reserves the right to reject any and all applications to pre-qualify and to bid without offering any reason, and waive any defect therein. TARELCO II reserves the right to reject any and all bids.

Additional information shall be furnished upon request. Send all communications to the PBAC Secretariat at the address mentioned above or at Telephone No. (45) 923-0460 or Fax Nos. (045) 923-0471 & 609-0224.

(Sgd.) **MARILOU N. VERGARA**
PBAC Chairman

(PDI–Jan. 31 & Feb. 3, 2007)

Provincial Government of Bukidnon

Project Reference Number
Name of the Project
Location of the Project

Standard Form Number: SF-GOOD-05
Revised on: July 28, 2004

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Provincial Government of Bukidnon through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites suppliers/manufacturers/distributors/contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the hereunder projects:

Name of Project
Project I: Reference #300-07-10 : **Supply & Delivery of Various Construction Materials for Talakag Water System Project : F.O.B. Talakag, Bukidnon**
Project II: Reference #300-07-11 **1 Contract: Furnishing of Labor for the construction of Talakag Water System including hauling of Construction Materials to the Jobsite**

Description/Location of the Project
Project I : For the Construction of Talakag Water System, Talakag, Bukidnon
Project II : Scope of Work

1. Construction of 1 unit Intake box (1,000 gals capacity)
2. Installation of Transmission/Distribution lines and fittings
3. Construction of River Crossing structure
4. Construction of one (1) Ground Reservoir (26,000 gals. capacity)
5. Construction of 2 units Ground Reservoir (6,000 gals. capacity)

Approved Budget for the Contract
Project I : **Twenty Two Million Nine Hundred Two Thousand Three Hundred Twenty Four Pesos and Fifty Three Centavos (P22,902,324.53)**
Project II . **Four Million Three Hundred Eighty One Thousand Seven Hundred Twenty One Pesos and Seven Centavos (P4,381,721.07)**

Project Completion/Duration
Project I · Fifteen (15) Calendar Days upon receipt of Notice to Proceed
Project II · Two Hundred (200) Calendar upon receipt of Notice to Proceed

Prospective bidders should have experience in undertaking a similar project within the last 2 years with an amount of at least 50% of the proposed project for bidding. The Eligibility Check/Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids shall use non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria. Post-qualification of the lowest calculated bid shall be conducted.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Pre-Biding Conference Performance Security, Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulation (IRR).

The complete schedule of activities is listed, as follows:

Activities	Schedule	Venue
1 Advertisement	February 2-February 13, 2007	Provincial Website, GEPS, Vicinity of PGSO, PGO, PTO & BAC Office
2. Issuance of Bid Documents	February 12-13, 2007	BAC Conference Room, Provincial Capitol, Malaybalay City
3 Pre-Bidding Conference	February 14, 2007, 2:00 p.m.	BAC Conference Room, Provincial Capitol, Malaybalay City
4. Opening of Bids Deadline for Submission of Bids	February 21, 2007, 2:00 p.m Not later than 2:00 p.m.	BAC Conference Room, Provincial Capitol, Malaybalay City
5 Bid Evaluation	February 23, 2007	BAC Conference Room, Provincial Capitol, Malaybalay City
6. Post Qualification	February 26, 2007	BAC Conference Room, Provincial Capitol, Malaybalay City
7. Notice of Award	March 1, 2007	BAC Conference Room, Provincial Capitol, Malaybalay City

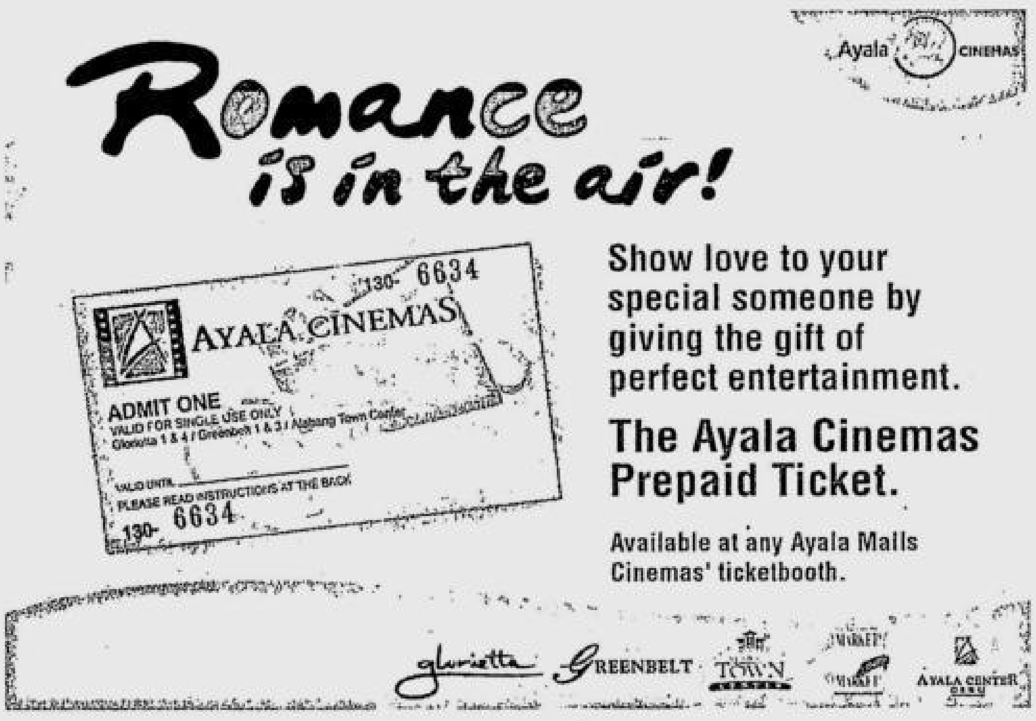
Bid documents will be available to prospective bidders upon payment of non-refundable Bid documents fee in the amount of Five Thousand Pesos (P5,000.00) for Project I and Three Thousand Pesos (P3,000.00) for Project II. For inquiry, please call Telephone Nos. 088-221-2537 and 088-221-4820.

The Provincial Government of Bukidnon assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of the bid.

Approved:

(Sgd.) **JOSEFREDIE F. FLORES**
BAC Chairman

(PDI–Feb. 3 & 9, 2007)



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Will Ferrell
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Ayala Cinemas

glorietta

MTRCB Rating: Parental Guidance 13 (PG-13)

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*See promo banners for more details

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First Prize:
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• Total Rejuvenating Facial for two at Dermclinic
• Make-over at Bench Fix Salon for Two

Second Prize: Dinner Date for Two at Fish & Co.
Gift Pack from Dermclinic

Third Prize: Movie Date for Two
Gift Certificate from Fish & Co.

CONSOLATION PRIZES:
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• 50 Holy Kettle Korn Popcorn • 50 Timezone Game Cards • 1 Gift Certificate from Ice Vodka Bar • 2 Gift packs from Dermclinic • 2 Gift Certificates from Fish & Co. • 5 Bench Fix Salon Gift Certificates

Promo Period: February 1-11, 2007
Deadline for submission of entries: February 11, 2007
Raffle Draw: February 12, 2007, 4:30pm with a DTI Representative
Per DTI Permit A1-070 Series of 2007

dermclinic HOLY KETTLE CORN! bench FIX salon glorietta GREENBELT

The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

71 killed in Iraq attacks

HILLA, IRAQ—AT LEAST 71 PEOPLE WERE killed in Iraq on Thursday as security officials reported that bitter sectarian attacks had claimed the lives of nearly 2,000 civilians throughout the country in January.

In sparsely populated southern Iraq, meanwhile, a grave containing the remains of 200 to 250 people—probably Kurds—was discovered near the border with Saudi Arabia, a provincial official told AFP.

A media watchdog group added that at least 65 media workers were killed and 20 kidnapped in the country in 2006, the most lethal year since the US-led invasion in March 2003.

Two suicide bombers killed 58 people and wounded 137 when they targeted the center of Hilla, the predominantly Shiite capital of Babil province south of Baghdad, security and medical sources said.

Policemen tried to disarm the first bomber but could not stop twin blasts which struck a crowded market, police officer Kazem al-Shamari told AFP.

The first bomb sent a panicked crowd fleeing in the direction of the second bomber, who then blew himself up, he added. More than 20 shops were destroyed in the blast.

In central Baghdad, six people died and 12 were wounded when an explosion ripped a bus apart on the main road in Karrada district, a security official said.

Another car bomb in the city center left three people dead and seven wounded, he added.

Four more people died in other bomb and mortar attacks in the capital, and 30 bodies were also found in several districts.

To the south, officials discovered a mass grave in the province of Muthanna that held the bodies of 200 to 250 probably Kurdish prisoners, a provincial official said.

Amin Mohammed Amin said the grave was found west of the town of Salman, less than a kilometer (half a mile) from a former detention camp, thanks to information from inhabitants of the mainly deserted region.

The grave extended over more than 200 square meters (2,150 square feet) and included the bodies of men, women and children in Kurdish clothing, he added. *AFP*

High-tech combat tools

OROGRANDE, NEW MEXICO—In a mock raid on a fake village, the US Army unveiled parts of its high-tech Future Combat Systems, demonstrating equipment that aims to make soldiers' work safer.

The exercise was the first public glimpse of a series of camera mounted-robots, small unmanned planes, radios that can send text messages and other equipment that Army and defense officials say will make combat safer for US personnel.

As soldiers charged toward the buildings, they sent in a camera-mounted robot, called a SUGV or small unmanned ground vehicle, to see what they were facing.

The images were relayed in real time to field commanders, who described them to forward soldiers. Images from the small unmanned aerial vehicle were also sent to the battlefield in real time.

Without this equipment, a US soldier could be injured or killed trying to gather the same information, Army commanders said.

Soldiers said the new tools, which include computer software that tracks the movements of US soldiers and the enemy, also help prevent deadly friendly fire incidents. *AP*

WorldBriefs

San Francisco mayor 'deeply sorry' for affair

SAN FRANCISCO—San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom admitted on Thursday to having an affair with the wife of his former campaign manager, who quit a day earlier after confronting the up-and-coming Democrat and gay marriage advocate. "I am deeply sorry," Newsom told reporters, admitting the affair after the San Francisco Chronicle reported that Alex Tourk had resigned from Newsom's reelection campaign after his wife disclosed the romantic involvement. *Reuters*

US Senate votes hike in minimum wage

WASHINGTON—The US Senate has voted overwhelmingly to raise the federal minimum wage for the first time in nearly a decade, a major promise of new Democratic congressional leaders. Lawmakers voted 94 to three Thursday to raise the wages rate by $2.10 per hour—from $5.15 an hour to $7.25. That means the annual salary for a full-time minimum-wage worker would rise from about $11,000 a year to about $15,000. The House approved a similar measure on Jan. 10, and the two bills will now have to be reconciled before going to the desk of President George W. Bush, to be signed into law. *AFP*

Putin promises democratic elections

MOSCOW—Russian President Vladimir Putin vowed Thursday that presidential elections next year will be fully democratic and fiercely defended Russia's energy policies, while expressing interest in proposals for an international natural gas cartel. Addressing an annual Kremlin press conference, Putin repeated that he would step down in 2008 at the end of his second term, as required under the constitution. He insisted his replacement would be democratically elected in a March 2, 2008 poll, saying: "There won't be a chosen successor—there will be candidates." "The authorities' task is to ensure the democratic character of the elections … so that citizens can make their choice," he said. Putin, who has been widely accused of rolling back democracy in Russia since taking over the Kremlin in 2000, refused to say whom he would like to see as his replacement. Many analysts believe that Putin's endorsement will be decisive. *AFP*

THE REMAINS of a painting destroyed during the Taliban regime seen at the National Gallery in Kabul, Afghanistan Jan. 9. A display case tucked away under a staircase on the ground floor contains the torn-up remains of hundreds of figurative artworks that were destroyed by the Taliban. AP

Afghan drug lord worked with US

WASHINGTON—IN APRIL 2005, federal law enforcement officials summoned reporters to a Manhattan news conference to announce the capture of an Afghan drug lord and Taliban ally. While boasting that he was a big catch, the officials left out some puzzling details, including why the Afghan, Haji Bashir Noorzai, had risked arrest by coming to New York.

Now, with Noorzai's case likely to come to trial this year, a fuller story about the American government's dealings with him is emerging.

Soon after the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, Noorzai agreed to cooperate with American officials, who hoped he could lead them to hidden Taliban weapons and leaders, according to current and former government officials and Noorzai's American lawyer. The relationship soured, but American officials tried to renew it in 2004.

A year later, Noorzai was secretly indicted and lured to New York, where he was arrested after nearly two weeks of talks with law enforcement and counterterrorism officials in a hotel.

In fighting the war on terrorism, government officials have often accepted tradeoffs in developing relationships with informants with questionable backgrounds. The government's shifting views of Noorzai parallels its evolving perspective on Afghanistan's heroin trade.

In the first years after the US invasion in late 2001, military and intelligence officials mostly chose to ignore opium production and instead dealt freely with warlords, including drug traffickers who promised information about members in the Taliban and al-Qaida or offered security in the chaotic countryside. But in more recent years, as poppy production has soared and financed a revived Taliban insurgency, the Americans have begun to take some more aggressive steps. *NYT*

6 Palestinians die; Gaza truce in jeopardy

GAZA CITY—SIX PALESTINIANS WERE killed on Thursday as new clashes threatened to destroy a three-day truce between warring factions Fatah and Hamas and shooting spread like wildfire through the Gaza Strip.

The trouble erupted outside the entrance to the Bureij and Nuseirat refugee camps in the heart of the territory, where a presidential guardsman loyal to Fatah was shot dead when Hamas gunmen ambushed a supply convoy from Egypt.

The man was identified as 24-year-old Ramadan al-Mushallah from Force 17, loyal to Palestinian president and Fatah leader Mahmoud Abbas.

Three more presidential guard members were killed in continued fighting in Nuseirat and altogether 70 people were wounded in Gaza, medical sources said.

A fifth Palestinian was killed in the northern town of Jabaliya where shooting broke out between Hamas militants and intelligence officers loyal to Fatah as violence spread elsewhere across the radicalized Gaza Strip.

The sixth, a member of Hamas's security forces, was killed in a gunbattle in Gaza City.

The Palestinian presidency in Ramallah in the West Bank blamed Hamas for the Gaza violence.

"The presidency strongly condemns the intentional and premeditated flare-up provoked by Hamas and its militiamen under lying pretexts," said presidency spokesperson Nabil Abu Rudeina in a statement late on Thursday.

The clashes were the worst violation yet of a tentative three-day truce between the rival factions. It began on Tuesday after several days of deadly internecine Palestinian fighting left 35 people dead.

The presidential guard accused gunmen from the Islamist Hamas of starting the violence by using an impromptu checkpoint to intercept a convoy from Egypt that was transporting tents and equipment for the presidential guard. *AFP*

Blair quizzed again over 'cash-for-honors'

LONDON—BRITISH PRIME Minister Tony Blair has been questioned by police for a second time over a "cash-for-honors" probe, the Downing Street office said Thursday, clouding his final months in office. The revelation came two days after a key Blair aide was re-arrested on suspicion of a cover up over the alleged illicit funding of his governing Labor Party.

Blair, who in December became the first serving British premier to be questioned by police, was interviewed again last week—once more as a witness rather than as a suspect, his office was quick to stress.

"Last Friday the prime minister was briefly interviewed by the police as a witness," said a Downing Street statement, adding that the questioning—which lasted less than an hour—was kept secret at the request of police.

Meanwhile, Lord Michael Levy, Blair's Middle East envoy and chief party fundraiser, was arrested Tuesday for a second time in the probe.

Two weeks ago, another key figure close to Blair, Ruth Turner, director of government relations at Downing Street, was also arrested.

Levy was arrested on suspicion of conspiracy to pervert the course of justice before being released on bail, while Turner was held on suspicion of breaching the Honors Act 1925 and perverting the course of justice.

Their arrests, as well as Blair's second round of questioning, have prompted speculation that the police investigation is snowballing towards a conclusion.

Blair's official spokesperson said it was "a matter entirely for police" whether he would be questioned again, adding that the prime minister had not been accompanied by a lawyer.

Elfyn Llwyd, leader of the Welsh nationalist party Plaid Cymru who was one of the lawmakers whose questions had prompted the probe, said he thought police would hand a file in the case to prosecutors within the next month.

"I believe there will be some charges and they will be very close to Downing Street … this web actually finishes at 10 Downing Street," he told Sky News television.

Officers investigating the case requested a news blackout on the interview, which took place shortly before Blair attended the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. This was only lifted Thursday.

In a brief statement, London's Metropolitan Police said they had interviewed Blair again to "clarify points emerging from the ongoing investigation." Adding that he had "cooperated fully," the statement said that the meeting was kept secret "for operational reasons." The so-called "cash-for-honors" probe was launched last March and has seen Blair and his entire cabinet interviewed by detectives. *AFP*

SUPER BABY Antonio Vasconcelos, tagged 'Super Tonio,' is cared for by a nurse at a hospital in Cancun, Mexico, Feb. 1. At a whopping birth weight of 6.6 kg (14.5 pounds), measuring 55 cm (22 inches) in length, doctors say the baby drinks five ounces of milk every three hours. AFP

CHIRAC AP

Chirac forced to retract remarks on a nuclear Iran

PARIS—PRESIDENT JACQUES Chirac, seeking to limit the diplomatic reaction over his remarks on Iran's nuclear ambitions, reaffirmed Thursday that France remained committed to preventing Iran from becoming a nuclear power.

The statement was issued within hours of the publication of an interview in which Chirac said that if Iran had one or two nuclear weapons, it would not pose a serious danger because the launching of such a weapon would lead to the immediate destruction of Tehran.

The president's office denounced the publication of his comments as a "shameful campaign" and accused American news media outlets of "using any excuse to engage in France-bashing."

The remarks, made in an interview on Monday with The New York Times, The International Herald Tribune and Le Nouvel Observateur, a weekly magazine, differed vastly from stated French policy and from what Chirac has often said.

On Tuesday, Chirac summoned the same journalists back to Elysee Palace to retract many of his remarks.

"France, along with the international community, cannot accept the prospect of a nuclear-armed Iran," said a statement from his office issued Thursday.

Despite the statement Thursday from Elysee Palace, Le Monde called Chirac's remarks on Iran a "radical turnaround that comes at a bad moment" and argued that they also risked diminishing France's credibility on the international stage.

Several of France's main allies in the negotiations with Iran said Thursday, at least officially, that they were reassured by the president's swift self-correction.

Reacting to the notion that a nuclear-armed Iran would not be highly dangerous, the British foreign secretary, Margaret Beckett, said, "It is not a sentiment I share, and from what I understand, the French president doesn't share it anymore, either."

A German diplomat said he was confident that French policy on Iran was unchanged, while the State Department said it was satisfied that this was the case.

Less than three months before Chirac's second term expires, some French diplomats said privately that they were concerned that he could make unilateral diplomatic overtures to Tehran in an effort to strengthen his legacy.

Chirac's comments also made waves in the French presidential campaign.

The opposition Socialist Party was happy to enter the fray, not least because its candidate, Segolene Royal, was recently criticized over her stance on Iran. She had suggested that Iran should not even be given access to civilian nuclear energy.

"It is incomprehensible that a senior French politician could speak as if Iran already had a nuclear bomb," said Jack Lang, Royal's foreign policy adviser.

New York Times News Serivce

02•03•07

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02•03•07

WHAT'S INSIDE

Wade generates Heat; Suns rally to eclipse Spurs /A23

SPORTS

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Editor Teddyvic S. Melendres

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Fisher pulls away; Woods 5 off /A23

Magada, Miñoza hound leaders

By Musong R. Castillo

ROMY HOMILLADA

LEADER: China's Liang Wenchong is lucky to save par on the punishing 17th hole.

AFTER OPENING UP WITH A WHIMPER, FILipino legend Frankie Miñoza made his move and put himself within striking distance of the leaders halfway through the 91st Philippine Open at Wack Wack yesterday.

But it was Benjie Magada, a wry, cigarette-puffing veteran who got into the tournament via the final qualifying, who found himself as the local bet closest to solo leader Liang Wenchong after 36 holes.

Liang, the fast-rising star from China, assembled a three-under-par 69 for a 137 aggregate and a one-shot lead over Aussie Neven Basic.

Magada lay another stroke back after a brilliant 68 at the Mandaluyong club's fabled East course.

And that was after Miñoza shared low honors for the day with a roller-coaster 67 to vault into a share of fourth spot at 140 with two others in the $300,000 event that will miss Asian Tour Rookie of the Year Juvic Pagunsan in the weekend.

Pagunsan tripped on a disastrous quadruple bogey-8 on No. 2 on the way to a 77 and a 36-hole total of 156, seven strokes over the halfway cut. He had a 79 in the first round Thursday.

Basic, an RP Open first-timer from Sydney, was the second of three players who fired 67s—the other being tall countryman Adam Blyth—to zoom to solo second from joint 17th overnight.

Miñoza, the 47-year-old Filipino No. 1, talked with a lot of irony moments after turning in a card highlighted by eight birdies, five of them coming in a row from No. 12, against three bogeys, all on the frontside.

"I was hitting it very well in the first round and yet I turned in an ugly score (73)," he said. "And today, I wasn't hitting it that pretty but I was able to turn in a good score.

"I guess I got kind of lucky in the back nine," he added. "My putting was really good today."

Jason Knutzon of the United States, one of six players who shared the lead with a 68 on Thursday, matched par, while Australian Jarrod Moseley fired a 71 to be in the company of Miñoza, who has never really had good success over the old, tree-lined course.

The 40-year-old Magada got it to 6-under with just three holes left, only to miss the seventh green—his 16th hole—after pushing a 5-iron to the thick rough and failing to convert a six-footer for par.

"I was just lucky today," he said in Filipino. "I was only looking to submit an even par score for today."

MAGADA/ A23

RP Open 2nd round scores, 3rd round pairings A23

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LOVE POTION FOR MEN
Honey, huwag ng makulit...
Honey, huwag ng makulit...
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(HINDI KA MAPAPAHIYA)
Tonton Gutierrez
Actor

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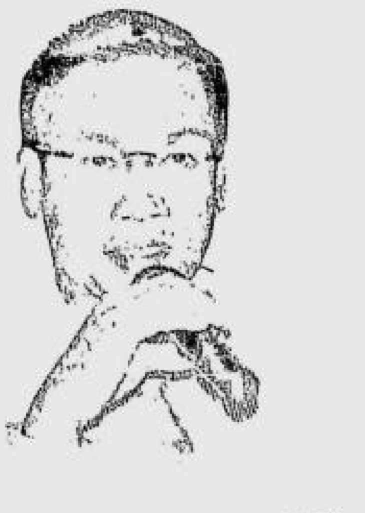


EALA: To compare notes with Fiba.

SBP party to meet with top Fiba-Asia exec

By Francis Ochoa

A FIVE-MAN PARTY COMPOSED OF TOP-ranking officials of the Samahng Basketbol ng Pilipinas will fly to Bangkok to meet international basketball federation (Fiba)-Asia secretary general Dato Teoh Cho Hock as part of its pre-Unity Congress tasks.

"This is still in line with the Tokyo agreement, that we continuously update the oversight committee of the executive board," said PBA commissioner Noli Eala, the SBP spokesman who will be part of the five-man group led by PLDT chief Manny V. Pangilinan.

Joining Pangilinan, who is the looming SBP president, and Eala are PBA chair Ricky Vargas, three-man panel member Junjun Capistrano and SBP legal counsel Marivic Anonuevo.

"This is our final push with the Fiba," Eala said. "We hope this will complete our reporting before we hold the Unity Congress."

The SBP will hold the Unity Congress, a meeting composed of the major basketball stakeholders in the country, on Feb. 5 at the Dusit Hotel.

The Basketball Association of the Philippines, the organization that is battling the SBP for the right to be the national federation of the sport in the country, has said it will not attend the congress.

The trip comes on the heels of reports that a BAP official has already flown to Thailand to talk with Fiba-Asia officials, who will be present there to witness the Under-18 tournament.

"We don't mind," said Eala. "We are there to report only. It will be an opportunity for us to answer his questions. We will not be afraid to refute any of the claims of the BAP group that is there if it is necessary.

"It's really the BAP who has to explain why they are not attending the congress".

Eala and Co. are going to stay in Bangkok until Sunday and will also meet Fiba secretary general Patrick Baumann, who also chairs the Fiba's oversight committee.

Eala added that the SBP has already extended an invitation to Fiba officials, specifically Baumann, to attend the Unity Congress.

"But the tournament they are watching will run until Aug. 5 so I don't know if they can make it," Eala said. "Although Baumann still hasn't denied or accepted the invitation."

Eala also revealed that the SBP lawyers are all on stand-by just in case the BAP files a temporary restraining order on the Unity Congress.

Toyota Otis, Hapee gun for 2-0 leads

HAPEE-PCU AND TOYOTA OTIS, BLESSED with topnotch guards, will shoot for a commanding 2-0 lead in the PBL best-of-five semifinal series today.

Jason Castro will be at the forefront of Hapee-PCU's assault versus Mail and More at 2 p.m., while Marvin Cruz will try to sustain Toyota Otis' winning roll against Harbour Centre at 4 p.m.

Game 2 of the Silver Cup's Final Four action will be at The Arena in San Juan.

"He's really trying his best to lead the team," said coach Jun Noel after Castro delivered another brilliant all-around performance with 15 points, seven assists and five rebounds in Hapee-PCU's Game 1 triumph, 81-67.

Toyota Otis also gained the upper hand in the semifinal opener with a come-from-behind 84-77 triumph last Thursday.

"Our strength has really been our backcourt," said Sparks coach Louie Alas.

The Sparks used a 25-5 run in the last six minutes to steal the semifinal opener from the Port Masters. Cruz orchestrated the comeback to finish with 19 points, nine coming from the payoff period.

But Alas also credited his team's improved offensive rebounding and stifling defense in their late-game rally.

"That was a good defense by (Patrick) Cabahug on JC Intal," noted Alas.

GAMES TODAY
(*The Arena, San Juan*)
2 p.m.—Hapee-PCU vs Mail and More (Hapee-PCU leads series, 1-0)
4 p.m.—Toyota Otis vs Harbour Centre (Toyota Otis leads series, 1-0)

The Sparks held the Harbour Centre star scoreless in the last three quarters for a measly five-point production.

"We rushed our plays in the last four minutes which was a mistake," admitted Port Masters mentor Jorge Gallent. "But the most important thing is how to limit what Marvin (Cruz) is doing on the court."

Cabahug contributed 11 points, including two triples in the final two minutes that boosted the Sparks' late surge.

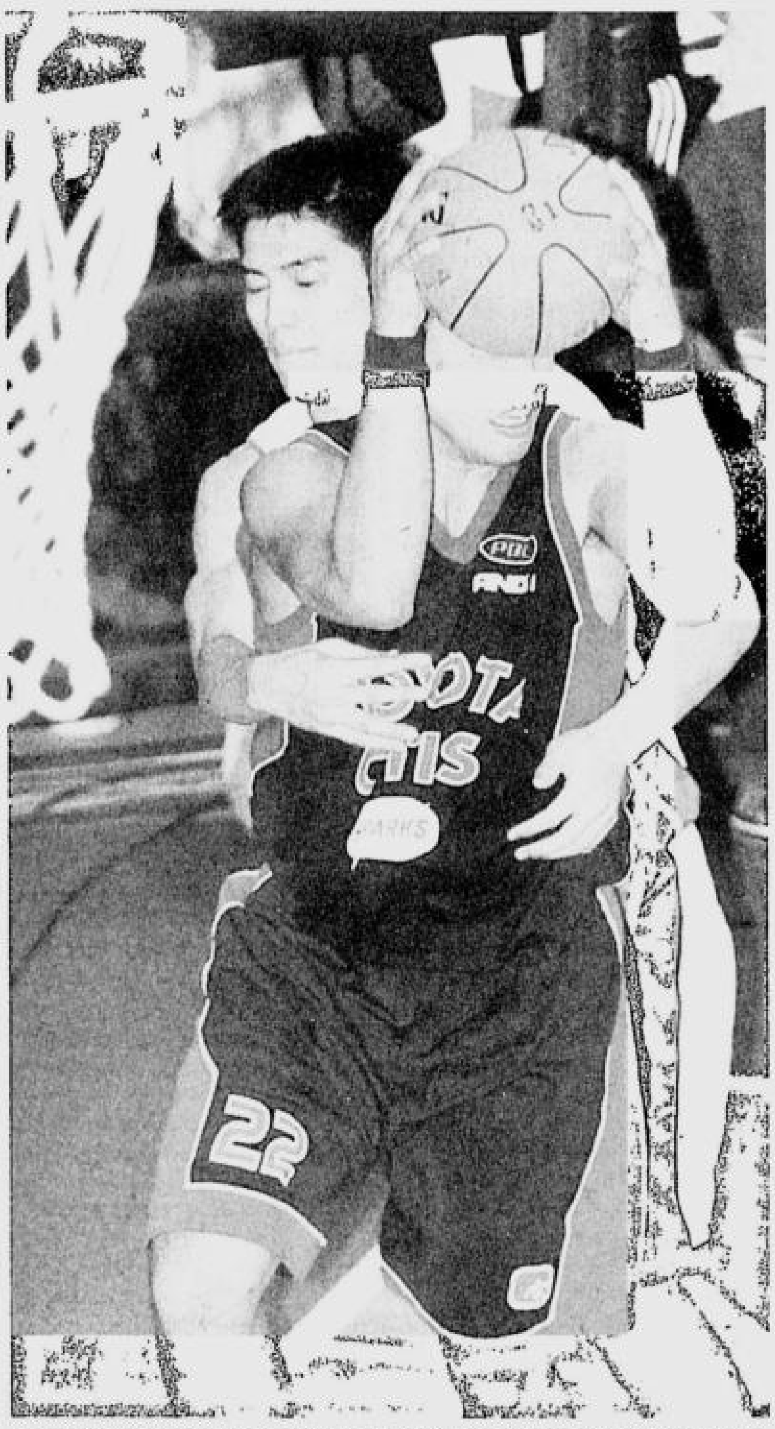
Christian Coronel and Dennis Daa also combined for 14 markers in the pivotal run.

Harbour Centre remained winless in three head-to-head encounters with Toyota Otis this conference.

Meanwhile, Mail and More's JR Quiñahan remained to be a non-factor for the third straight game. Last Thursday, the beefy center had only four charities to show after missing four attempts from the field.

The Teeth Masters forced the Comets to commit 31 turnovers, while limiting their own errors to only 14.

Jasmine W. Payo



FALLING a step behind a driving Dennis Daa of Toyota Otis, Harbour Centre's JC Intal grabs him instead during Thursday's game. RYAN LIM

Training center, village for RP sports heroes rising in Clark

By June Navarro

A TRAINING CENTER FOR OLYMPIC SPORTS and an exclusive village for athletes who made the country proud will soon rise in Clark Field, Pampanga.

The Philippine Olympic Committee has already initiated exploratory talks with the Clark Development Corp. on the construction of the training center and village within the 5,500-hectare former United States Air Force base.

The Olympic Council of Asia had initially donated $100,000 (P5 million) to get the ambitious project of the POC off the ground.

"We will set up the masterplan as soon as we get the necessary permits and documents," said POC chair Robert Aventajado. "This will be a long-term project and good achievement before our term expires."

Aventajado's term and that of POC president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco Jr. will expire next year after the Beijing Olympics.

Cojuangco said the project could start the moment the POC's contractor, Palafox and Associates, identifies and makes the necessary surveys at the area of Clark where the training center and village would rise.

Cojuangco also said Clark development authorities have started sprucing up the baseball and football fields built by the US government.

Aside from the building of the Olympic training center and housing projects, the POC will also help provide livelihood to the families of athletes who will train for the Olympics.

"We will try to lure big companies to support this project," said Cojuangco. "This will provide the athletes a venue away from distractions so that they could focus on their training."

By George, he'd gone ahead

By Percy D. Della

SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA—HE WAS THE mellifluous news presence on Baguio radio. He reported the day's events with the calm assurance oozing from his voice.

"Remember you heard it first on DZHB," George Jularbal would remind his listeners from inside the hermitically sealed former Radio Mindanao Network studio on Assumption Road.

Jularbal in those pre-martial law years was a Baguio mainstay of the "sound of the city," as RMN stations marketed themselves then. He was the star of the airwaves in the summer capital and points north.

His style contrasted with those of his more famous and seasoned Manila colleagues—Edward Tipton, Milton Alingod and Hermie Rivera—natives of Ilocoslovakia like himself.

But by George! He held his own against the big guns. Jularbal was a name to reckon with as a broadcaster. Besides, he dabbled as a print journalist known to string words in a sentence beautifully.

He was a damn good sportswriter who left this writer and another guy eating the dust. But that's getting ahead of the story.

Anyway, I learned from a recent report by Frank Cimatu of INQUIRER Northern Luzon that George died of emphysema last month.

Only a few moons back, Frank and Jun Balbin, also of the INQUIRER, struggled to pay attention while raising a glass with me at home in Candon City, Ilocos Sur. That evening I was reminiscing about George and our batch of sportswriters.

I was remembering our indiscretions on a then barren Session Road, each time we were up in Baguio for the Tour of Luzon and other sports events of note up there, which were many in our time.

Frank, gentleman George never pissed on the everlastings planted on the city's main drag. He watched in disbelief as we made fools of ourselves. His presence also ensured that one more beer did not turn the group's favored watering hole into a disaster area.

George remained with his Baguio media gang until 1972, when he decided to try his luck in Manila as a sportswriter of the Philippines Herald. He was among three people who tried out to replace Cris Maralit, then getting ready to join the officers' school of the defunct Philippine Constabulary.

COMMENTARY

In case you've been hiding under a rock, Maralit became a police general and retired as spokesman of the Philippine National Police, successor to the constabulary.

Anyway, George's rivals for Maralit's position came well-recommended. Like the future general, one of them was also a sports editor of the Varsitarian, the school paper of the University of Santo Tomas.

To make a long story short, George a bit older and wiser, got the nod of Iking Gonzales, then the brand-new Herald sports editor.

The other two guys? Well, they were prompted to do better.

And the rest, as they say, was destiny.

With a stroke of luck, this writer joined the sports section of the rival Manila Times if only for a spell.

Leo S. Reyes went back to school.

The three of us were to be reunited at the Philippines News Agency when Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law.

In the years that ensued, George returned to Baguio as PNA bureau chief. He again went back to Manila as INQUIRER desk editor and then traveled to the Middle East to become features editor of the Saudi Gazette.

Leo became a press aide of the late senator Ambrosio Padilla and a senior editor of the PNA. He finished law school as a working journalist and is now a regional circuit judge in his native Cagayan.

I became a sportswriter for the Times Journal and returned as a desk slotman at the PNA while covering sports and features when I could.

Then I pounced on a chance to go to the United States and stayed there for almost three decades. I retired early as a California state government spokesman in 2005. I return to Sacramento from the Ilocos on occasion to visit my children and work with the governor's small army of information officers.

Farewell, George. You were a profound influence on many lives and careers.

Mine included.

Shin up against 100 top club golfers in Southern Ladies

CLOSE TO 100 OF THE COUNTRY'S FINEST club players are seeing action in the 44th Southern Ladies golf tournament which gets going on Thursday at the Iloilo Golf and Country Club in Iloilo.

Defending champion Crystal Shin of South Korea will try to prolong her reign against the likes of Philippine amateur champion Carmelette Villaroman and national team members Dottie Ardina and Cyna Rodriguez.

A brand new Mizuno Compact CT golf set will be staked as hole-in-one prize on No. 10.

Fabulous prizes are also up for grabs in the three-day event ending on Feb. 9, including two necklaces courtesy of Brumann International Jeweller, according to the organizing National Golf Association of the Philippines.

Meanwhile, Iloilo City Mayor Jerry Treñas, Chit Querubin, president of IGCC Ladies Chapter, and Mark Rivera, IGCC vice president representing IGCC president Frankie Locsin, will hit ceremonial drives on Feb. 6.

ARDINA

The traditional Lam-Am tournament will be played afterwards with a shotgun tee off starting at 12:30 p.m., according to the Southern Ladies executive committee composed of Chit Querubin, overall chair; Christine Popp, Helen Stummers, Corel Yap, Marita Soriano, Marirose Cacho and Maggie Rivera.

Twenty teams have registered. Aside from the Championship Flight, other divisions on tap are Classes A, B, C and D and seniors (55 and above).

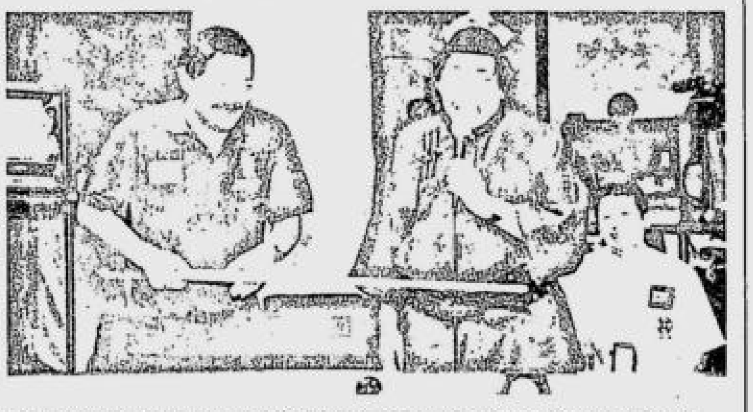
Abadia stuns No. 2 Antigua

CEBU—KENNEX ABADIA UPSET SECOND seed Larry Antigua, 4-6, 6-3, 16-14, to barge into the quarterfinals of the boys' 18-under division in the kickoff leg of the 2007 Milo Junior Tennis Cup and Regional Workshop at the Casino Español claycourts. The other quarterfinalists in the 20th season of the tournament organized by CTW were Francis Largo, who ousted Cyril Camporedondo, 7-5, 6-2, and June Montalbo who edged Christopher Yape, 7-5, 7-5. In 16-under play, Bernardine Siso stunned Montalbo, 6-2, 6-1; Jayvee Canoy blasted Gerald Lambayan, 6-1, 6-0; Amiel Aya-ay routed Jess Espinosa, 6-2, 6-3; and Lowell Canete downed Camporedondo, 6-2, 6-3. The unisex 10-under event saw Adrian Parangan beat Jomar Colonia 6-3, 6-2; Carlo Ramoneda rout Lucas Reitmueller 6-1, 6-0; John Necesario down Bran Mangapis 6-3, 7-5; Fritz Satera rip Mark Aroma 6-4, 6-1; and Joseph Tallo blast Kaye Repunte 6-1, 6-1.

SPORTSWATCH

17-school Tangkad Sagad caging starts

THE CHERIFER TANGKAD SAGAD BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT KICKS OFF its second season today at the Marikina Sports Park gym with a cast of teams from 17 schools. Defending champion San Beda-Manila, last year's national qualifier Don Bosco-Makati and regional finalists Christian International School and Don Bosco-Mandaluyong are favored to battle for top honors in the tournament conceptualized by Cherifer product manager Tom Meneses together with tournament director Edmundo "Ato" Badolato, coach of the San Beda high school squad, and organizer Bernard Ocampo. The event is a 5-on-5 hoopfest open to boys 12 years old and younger.



THE MAGICIAN AND THE 'MONGOLIAN': Comedian Mr. Shooli, a.k.a. director Jun Urbano, tries to distract pool icon Efren "Bata" Reyes during a match in the recent "Pakners: Mowelfund Celebrity 9-ball Tournament" at the Teatrino Restaurant in Greenhills, San Juan. Reyes lost to Gary Garcia in the finals of the tournament organized by the Movie Workers Welfare Foundation and sponsored by San Miguel Corp. for the benefit of off-screen film workers.

US breeders join Makati Int'l Derby

POPULAR AMERICAN BREEDERS BILL MACNATT AND JUNIOR BELT OF Oklahoma and Richard Kelly of Alabama registered yesterday for the upcoming "Makati 8-Cock International Derby," set Feb. 5, 7 and 9 at the Makati Coliseum. McNatt and Belt, who provided the gamefowls to 2007 NCA World Championship 8-cock derby winners Rep. Iggy Arroyo and Jesry Palmares, will field their remaining Cherokee warriors in their bid to clinch another championship in the Philippines. In the recent NCA cockfest, the JP Cherokee Red Creek I and II of Arroyo and Palmares posted 13 wins, one draw and two losses in 16 fights. Kelly, a guest of Pampanga cocker Efren Canlas, arrived last Wednesday with 20 Golden Yellow roundheads.

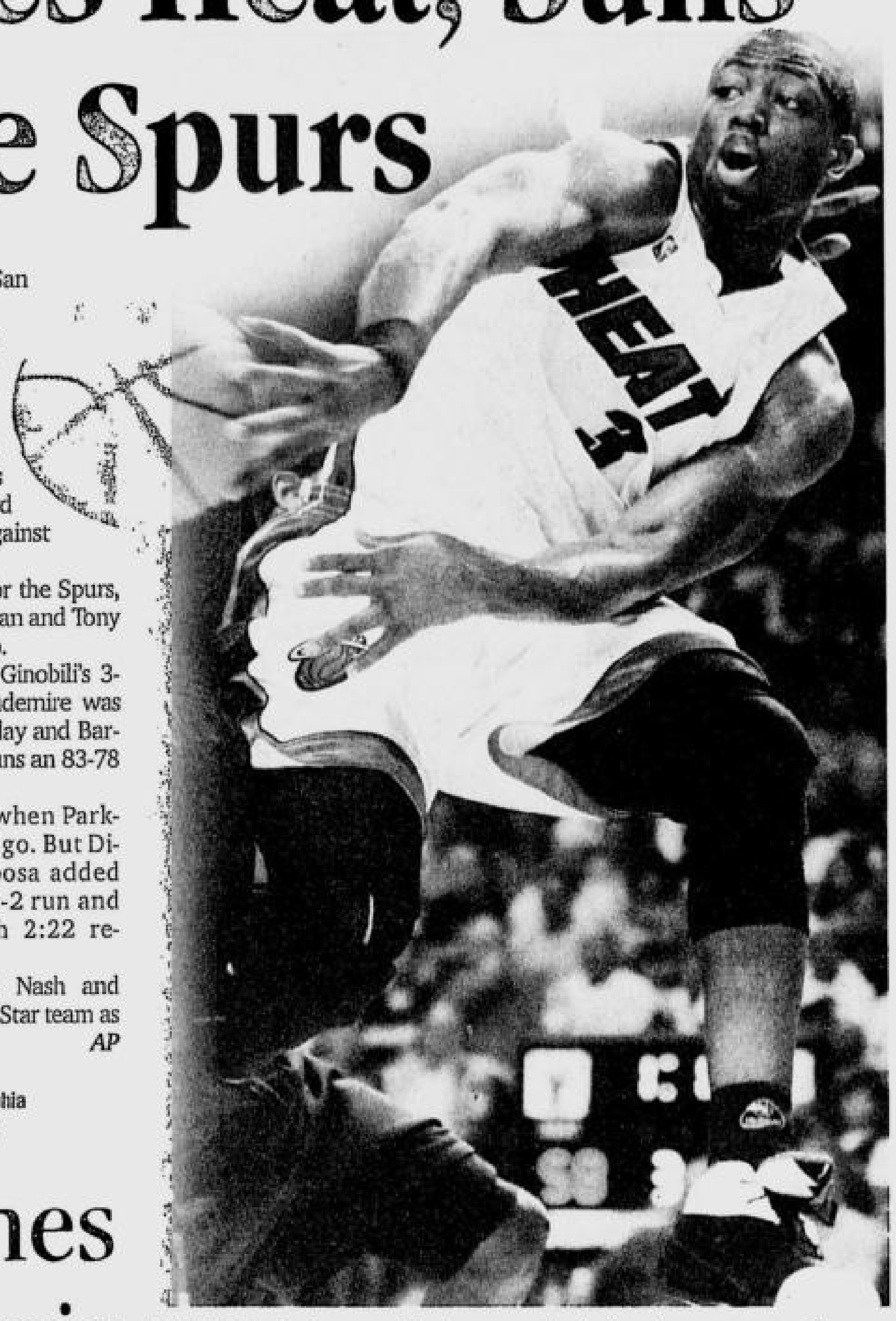
43 cockers show way in Roligon fights

THE THIRD ELIMINATION ROUND OF THE "RMC 17TH ANNIVERSARY 6-Cock Derby" blasts off at 2 p.m. today at Roligon Mega Cockpit, with 105 fights on tap and with Lakpue Drug Inc. and Thunderbird Enertone as sponsors. After two days of competition, 43 cockers led the final-round qualifiers with two wins each, among them Ronnie Puno, Roger Parungao, Madison Go, Ronald Barandino, Ed Moreno, Allan Que, Romy Sangalan and Eric Miranda. Hosted by Roligon owner Rolly Ligon, the event stakes a guaranteed prize of P4 million for an entry fee of P11,000.

Las Piñas 3-cocker gets going today

FIFTY-FOUR FIGHTS ARE ON THE ROSTER IN THE "LPC SPECIAL 3-COCK Derby" featuring leading cockers and breeders in Metro Manila at the Las Piñas Coliseum tonight. To be hosted by Mayor Nene Aguilar and coliseum manager Alex Tobias, the event stakes P200,000 cash prize plus three refrigerators. Each fight winner will get P1,000. Entries, with weight limits of 1.8 kilograms to 2.4 kg, must be submitted until 2 p.m. today. For inquiries, please call 873-1040 or 874-3910. The "Fastest Win One-Cock Timbangan" comes next on Feb. 8, with P15,000 going to the winner after every 10 fights.

Wade generates Heat; Suns rally to eclipse Spurs



MIAMI Heat's Dwayne Wade passes the ball as he penetrates the Cleveland Cavaliers' defense. REUTERS

MIAMI—DWYANE WADE HAD 41 POINTS—including a team-record 24 points in the final quarter—and the Miami Heat came from behind to beat the Cleveland Cavaliers 92-89 Thursday in a game that had some bizarre occurrences down the stretch.

With the Heat up 87-86 with 20.4 seconds left, Wade took a hard foul in the face, courtesy of his good friend LeBron James—who was called for a flagrant foul as Wade writhed in pain near midcourt. Wade made both free throws to push the lead to 89-86, then made one more after being fouled again 2.4 seconds later.

Wade had 12 turnovers, two more than his previous career worst and one more than the dubious mark Kevin Edwards set during the Heat's expansion season 18 years ago. But Wade more than atoned for that by making 23 of 24 free throws.

James, bothered by a sprained right big toe, played 36 minutes and finished with 17 points, nine assists and six rebounds—but was 3-for-8 from the line and missed three free throws in a span of 17.2 seconds late in the game, including one that would have tied it with 44.8 seconds left.

Shaquille O'Neal had 16 points before fouling out, and Jason Kapono added 13 for Miami. Daniel Gibson had 19 points and Drew Gooden added 11 for Cleveland.

At Phoenix, All-Star Amare Stoudemire had 24 points and 23 rebounds, Leandro Barbosa scored 25 points and Phoenix rallied to beat San Antonio, 103-87.

Phoenix, which had its 17-game winning streak snapped by Minnesota on Monday, has won 10 straight at home and 18 of 19 overall.

Boris Diaw scored 16 and Steve Nash added 13 points and 11 assists for the Suns, who won for the third time in 13 regular-season meetings against the Spurs.

Manu Ginobili scored 32 points for the Spurs, who have lost two straight. Tim Duncan and Tony Parker each added 20 for San Antonio.

The Spurs took a 78-77 lead on Ginobili's 3-pointer with 8:09 to play. But Stoudemire was fouled on a layup for a three-point play and Barbosa added a 3-pointer to give the Suns an 83-78 lead.

San Antonio closed to 85-84 when Parker hit a long jumper with 5:22 to go. But Diaw scored four points and Barbosa added his second 3-pointer to key a 10-2 run and put Phoenix ahead 95-85 with 2:22 remaining.

Earlier in the day, Stoudemire, Nash and Shawn Marion were added to the All-Star team as reserves. *AP*

NBA ON TV TODAY
8 a.m.—Golden State vs Philadelphia
(replays at 4 p.m. and 9:30 p.m.)

Viloria gets title shot as WBC strips Nino of title

MEXICO CITY—THE WORLD BOXING COUNCIL declared the light flyweight champion belt up for grabs Thursday, stripping Mexico's Omar Nino of the title for testing positive for methamphetamine following a Nov. 18 bout in Las Vegas.

American Brian Viloria, currently ranked first in the weight class, will fight second-ranked Edgar Sosa of Mexico for the title, the WBC said.

The WBC said the winner will have to defend his title against the 30-year-old Nino.

"In light of the fact that the WBC believes that Nino did not voluntarily commit this infraction, and considering that his clean record has won him the trust of this organization ... we are declaring that Nino will be the challenger for whoever is the new champion," a WBC statement said.

Boxing regulators in the US state of Nevada suspended Nino in December after he became the first fighter to test positive for methamphetamine in that state. Nino has denied using the drug.

Nino (24-2 with two draws) retained the 49-kilo (108-pound) title Nov. 18 with a majority draw over Viloria, the former champion. Nino first won the title with a unanimous decision over Viloria in August in Las Vegas. *AP*

Sharapova whitewashes Sugiyama, enters semis

SHARAPOVA

TOKYO—WORLD NUMBER ONE Maria Sharapova battled her way into the semifinals of the Pan Pacific Open with a 4-6, 6-0, 6-1 victory over Japan's Ai Sugiyama on Friday.

The 19-year-old Russian squandered a 3-1 lead to drop the first set but quickly recovered after a calming head-to-head with coach Michael Joyce to whitewash Sugiyama in the second.

Sharapova has dismissed on-court coaching as a gimmick but she only clicked into gear in her opening match against Italy's Francesca Schiavone following an ear-bashing from Joyce.

She made another rapid transformation after dropping the first set to local favorite Sugiyama, winning 12 of the next 13 games to advance to the last four in Tokyo.

Sharapova, beaten by Serena Williams in the Australian Open final last the weekend, faces the winner of the all-Serbian clash between Jelena Jankovic and Ana Ivanovic in the semifinals. *Reuters*

Nash heads reserves

NEW YORK—TWICE MVP STEVE Nash and fellow Phoenix Suns players Shawn Marion and Amare Stoudemire have been selected as reserves for the NBA's annual All-Star Game. They were among 14 players chosen by the coaches for the Feb. 18 showpiece to be held at Thomas & Mack Center in Las Vegas. Other reserves for the Western Conference team were Allen Iverson (Denver Nuggets), Dirk Nowitzki (Dallas Mavericks), Carlos Boozer (Utah Jazz) and Tony Parker (San Antonio Spurs). The Eastern Conference reserves are: Caron Butler (Washington Wizards), Dwight Howard (Orlando Magic), Chauncey Billups and Richard Hamilton (Detroit Pistons), Jason Kidd and Vince Carter (New Jersey Nets) and Jermaine O'Neal (Indiana Pacers). *Reuters*

'Killer' Chavez takes on Diaz

CHAVEZ

KISSIMMEE, FLORIDa—Mexico's Jesus Chavez, whose most recent opponent died after receiving serious brain injuries in their fight, makes his return to the ring here Saturday after a 16-month layoff.

Chavez, 42-3 with 30 knockouts, defends the International Boxing Federation lightweight crown he took from the late Leavander Johnson against American Julio Diaz, 33-3 with 24 knockouts.

"I'm pretty psyched to get back in the ring. It has been a long journey for me mentally and physically, but I think I have done a pretty good job of recovery on both those issues," Chavez said.

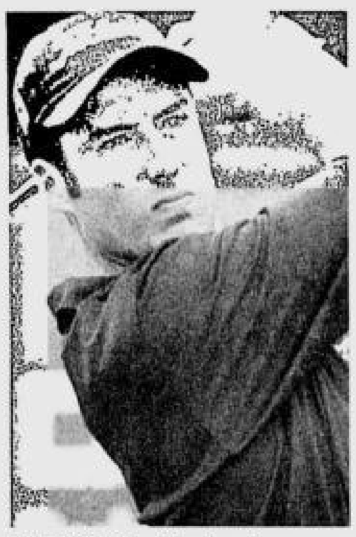
"I'm ready to fight. I've had a phemonenal training camp. I'm as ready as I can be."

Chavez has not fought since the September 2005 bout that ended in tragedy. Johnson died of serious brain injuries five days after being stopped in the 11th round by Chavez.

"I've been blessed with the Leavander Johnson family. They have been very supportive of me and my continuation of my boxing career," Chavez said.

Chavez spent a month in therapy sessions but said the biggest thing to help him recover from the tragedy was attending Johnson's funeral and receiving the support of the late fighter's family. *AFP*

Fisher pulls away; Woods 5 off



FISHER: King for two days. AP

DUBAI—ROSS FISHER WROTE ANOTHER chapter into his fairytale run at the Dubai Desert Classic on Friday, grabbing the overall lead early into the second round.

The unheralded 26-year-old Londoner fired a second straight seven-under 65, leaving him an astonishing 14-under for the tournament at the halfway stage.

With half the field nearing completion in the second round, Fisher was enjoying a four-stroke lead in the clubhouse over Graeme McDowell of Northern Ireland, with whom he had shared the first round lead.

Defending champion Tiger Woods kept the leaders firmly in his sights with five birdies for a 67 leaving him a further stroke back.

The tall, long-hitting Englishman is playing full-time on the European PGA Tour for only the second year, opening his season in disappointing fashion by missing the cut in Abu Dhabi two weeks ago.

But a spell of cold weather practice back home at Wentworth last week sorted out the flaws in his game and he has returned to the Gulf in storming fashion.

"I have only led a tournament once before at the 2005 China Open (finished joint fourth) and I haven't got over the hurdle so far but I feel so relaxed and comfortable here and hopefully I will learn," he said.

"I know deep down I am good enough and I feel at ease with my game and I know where I am going. I could shoot 65 again or even lower."

Spain's Miguel Angel Jimenez joined Woods on nine-under after a 68, with former winner Robert-Jan Derksen of the Netherlands a further stroke adrift after coming in with a fine 66.

Three-time former winner Ernie Els of South Africa was among those due out in the afternoon groupings after he confirmed his return to top form with a splendid 66 on Thursday. *AFP*

Magada, Miñoza hound leaders

From page A21

Magada's last victory came in 2004 at Eastridge in Binangonan, Rizal, where he birdied his last seven holes in the final round.

"My primary aim coming into this round [after shooting a 71 on Thursday] was just to make the cut and see what happens in the weekend," he added.

Blyth takes to the third round a 141 tally, just four shots off the lead like American Clay Devers (70), India's Digvijay Singh (70) and Philippines-based Canadian Rick Gibson, the 1999 champion who shot a 70.

Amateur ace Jay Bayron, who had a piece of the first-round lead with Carito Villaroman and three others, struggled in his final five holes and settled for a 74 for 142, just ahead of Tonlits Asistio in the low amateur race.

Asistio, the 18-year-old who has lorded it over the local junior ranks for quite sometime now, churned out his version of a 68 for a 143 total, good for a share of 16th spot with illaroman, who turned in a 75, Cookie La'O (70), joint first round leader Wang Ter-chang of Taiwan (75), 2000 winner Gerald Rosales (72), Thai Prayad Marksaeng (74) and Artemio Murakami (72).

Villaroman, the 1985 RP Amateur champ, had a triple bogey 7 on No. 2, where he found himself in the wooded rough, played out to 97 yards, but chunked a downhill approach that found the lagoon fronting the green.

Defending champion Scott Strange of Australia, added a 75 to an opening-round 73 and, at 148, was a huge 11 shots off the pace.

Antonio Lascuña, who qualified for the Asian Tour recently, rallied with a 69 after shooting a 78 on Thursday to make the weekend play with a 147 total like Angelo Que, who submitted a level 72.

Mars Pucay was also in that group at 51st place after a 75.

Former Asian No. 1 Thaworn Wiratchant of Thailand missed the cut after a 79 gave him a 155, in the company of Robert Pactolerin, the 1990 winner, who skied to an 81.

The other notables who failed to make it into weekend play were Asian Games bronze medalist Michael Bibat (80-152), 2001 winner Cassius Casas (76-152), and Edward Michaels, the American who won at Riviera in 2004 who totaled 152 after a second round 78.

The 30-year-old Liang, whose best finish on the Asian Tour was a tie for fourth at the Barclays Singapore Open in 2005, also had eight birdies like Miñoza but failed to turn in a lower score after taking three bogeys and a double bogey on No. 12.

The baby-faced native of Zhongshan City, who has an unorthodox, baseball style follow-through, is fresh off a joint ninth-place finish with Thailand's Thongchai Jaidee in the Qatar Masters where he earned $46,460.

FRANKIE Miñoza with flightmate Thaworn Wiratchant at No. 18. INQUIRER PHOTO/ROMY HOMILLADA

91st Philippine Open: Second round scores

137—L.Wenchong (China) 68-69;

138 - N. Basic (Aus) 71-67;

139 - B. Magada 71-68

140 - F. Miñoza 73-67; J. Moseley (Aus) 69-71; J. Knutzon (US) 68-72

141 - C. Devers (US) 71-70; R. Gibson (Can) 71-70; D. Singh (Ind) 69-72; A. Blyth (Aus) 74-67

142 - Lu WC (Tpe) 71-71; A. Kang (US) 68-74; D. Bransdon (Aus) 69-73; H. Lee (Kor) 70-72; J. Bayron (a) 68-74

143 - C. Villaroman 68-75; R. Beste (Aus) 72-71; Wang TC (Tpe) 68-75; A. Asistio II (a) 75-68; Sung MC (Tpe) 71-72; G. Rosales 73-70; bC. La'O 73-70; Kim HD (Kor) 73-70; A. Murakami 71-72; Park JW (Kor) 69-74; P. Marksaeng (Tha) 69-74

144 - Chang TP (Tpe) 72-72; D. Gleeson (Aus) 73-71; A. Le Vesconte (Aus) 72-72; P. Muenlek (Tha) 72-72; B. Saltus (US) 71-73; A. R. Zahari (mas) 73-71; Lin KC (Tpe) 72-72; T. Kiyota (Jpn) 70-74; M. Dizon 73-71

145 - U. S. Mundy (Ind) 75-70; M. Rominger (Sui) 73-72; S. K. Naing (Mya) 72-73; G. Mann (Ind) 70-75; Kao BS (Kor) 71-74; C. Plaphol (Tha) 76-69;

R. Bain (Sco) 73-72.

146 - R. Moir (Aus) 74-72; C. Nirat (Tha) 73-73; S. Srisanga (Tha) 76-70; M. Brown (Aus) 76-70; O. Nordberg (Swe) 70-76; G. Flint (Aus) 72-74; G. V. D. Valk (Nld) 71-75; Lu WT (Tpe) 72-74

147 - A. Hall (Aus) 73-74; Lin CH (Tpe) 74-73; M. Pucay 72-75; T. Lascuna 78-69; Yeh CT (Tpe) 74-73; W. Artjanawat (Tha) 72-75; A. Que 75-72; K. Tannin (Tha) 71-76

148 - Hwang JM (Kor) 75-73; A. Savolainen (Fin) 75-73; S. Higaki (Jpn) 72-76; E. Sanchez 73-75; S. Strange (Aus) 73-75; Lin WH (Tpe) 74-74

149 - M. Brown (Aus) 72-77; Hsieh CS (Tpe) 75-74; B. Iles (Aus) 73-76; S. Scahill (Nzl 76-73; D. Zarate 74-75; R. Pagunsan 78-71; A. Balan 73-76; E. Salvador 72-77; R. Jamnong (Tha) 78-71; Z. Moe (Mya) 75-74; S. Dunn (Sco) 76-73; Nam YW (Kor) 76-73; T. Carolan (Aus) 74-75; A. Fernando (a) 76-73; A. Singh (Ind) 75-74

Cut

150 - L. Dacudao (a) 76-74; D. Freeman 79-71; M. Booth 73-77; I. Quiachon 73-77; E. Heinen 74-76; Chen TZ 72-78; Lin CB 70-80; B. Hume 75-75

151 - S. Shimouchi 77-74; A. Prathummanee 77-74; C. Chia 79-72; T. Nakamura 73-78; J. Delariarte 77-74; C. Harris 75-76

152 - Lam CH 76-76; P. Tipsanit 77-75; M. Wright 76-76; I. Steel 76-76; T. Kennedy 76-76; E. Michaels 74-78; M. Bibat (a) 72-80; C. Casas 76-76; S. Griffiths 75-77

153 - C. Smith 79-74; S. Hend 81-72; E. Bagtas 75-78; Suk JY 77-76; S. Taylor 78-75; R. Garalde 75-78; J. Ababa (a) 77-76; A. Malik 78-75; Chan S 72-81; R. Sinfuego 72-81

154 - H. Yoshida 77-77; T. Ichihara 76-78; U. Park 81-73; A. Groom 78-76; G. Bondoc (a) 76-78; M. Fernando (a) 79-75; R. Ismail 76-78

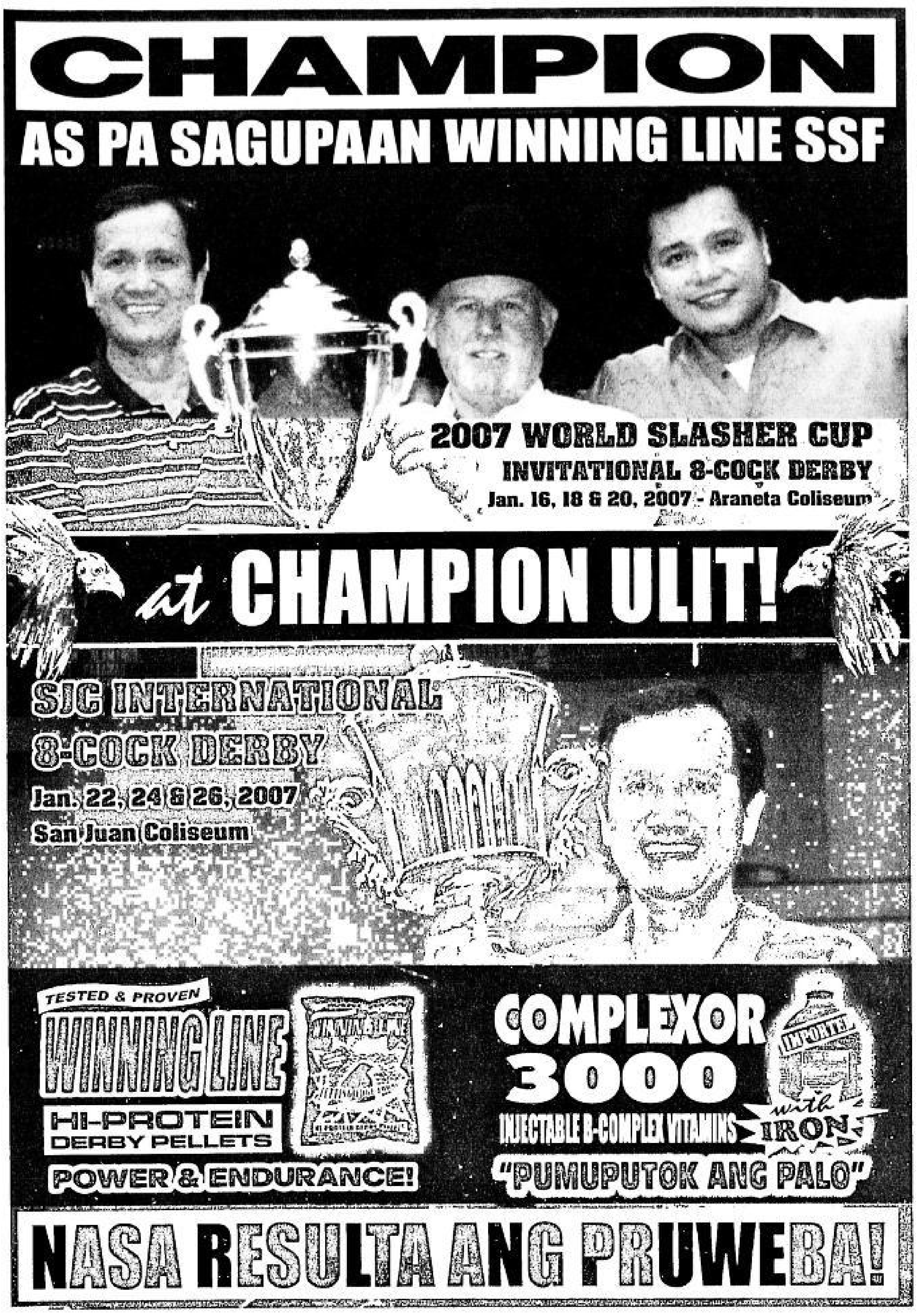
155 - T. Wiratchant 76-79; O. Sumcad 77-78; R. Pactolerin 74-81; R. Moon 78-77

156 - E. Estrera 80-76; R. Allt 75-81; K. Webber 81-75; M. Dumandan 81-75; A. Singh 77-79; M. Cunning 75-81; P. Gunasegaran 78-78; J. Pagunsan 79-77

157 - K. Tayao (a) 79-78; R. Abaring 78-79.

PAIRINGS: Third round

7 a.m.—A. Balan, R. Pagunsan,
7:10—T. Carolan, Nam YW,
7:20—S. Dunn, A. Singh, Z. Moe
7:30—R. Jamnong, E. Salvador, A. Fernando (a)
7:40—Hsieh CS, S. Scahill, M. Brown
7:50—B. Iles, D. Zarate, E. Sanchez
8:00—Lin WH, Shigemasa H., S. Strange
8:10—Hwang JM, A. Savolainen, M. Pucay
8:20—W. Artjanawat, Yeh CT, Lin CH,
8:35—A. Que, K. Tannin, A. Hall
8:45—T. Lascuna, G. Flint, O. Nordberg
8:55—M. Brown, Lu WT, G. Vander Valk
9:05—R. Moir, S. Srisa-Nga, C. Nirat
9:15—C. Plaphol, R. Bain, U. Singh Mundy
9:25—M. Rominger, Kao BS, G. Mann
9:35—Soe Kyaw N., Chang TP, Lin KC
9:45—A. Le Vesconte, A. Rizman Zahari, B. Saltus
9:55—M. Dizon, D. Gleeson, Taichiro K.
10:10—P. Muenlek, Park JW, P. Marksaeng
10:20 —A. Murakami, Kim HD, C. Villaroman
10:30—A. Asistio II (a), G. Rosales, Wang TC
10:40— R. Beste, Sung MC, C. Lao
10:50—J. Bayron (a), D. Bransdon, A. Kang
11:00—Lu WC, Han L. A. Blyth
11:10—D. Singh, R. Gibson, C. Devers
11:20—J. Knutzon, F. Minoza, J. Moseley
11:30—B. Magada, N. Basic, Liang WC


CHAMPION
AS PA SAGUPAAN WINNING LINE SSF
2007 WORLD SLASHER CUP
INVITATIONAL 8-COCK DERBY
Jan. 16, 18 & 20, 2007 - Araneta Coliseum
at CHAMPION ULIT!
SJC INTERNATIONAL 8-COCK DERBY
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Five or six boxers, 4 jins to Olympics

By Marc Anthony Reyes

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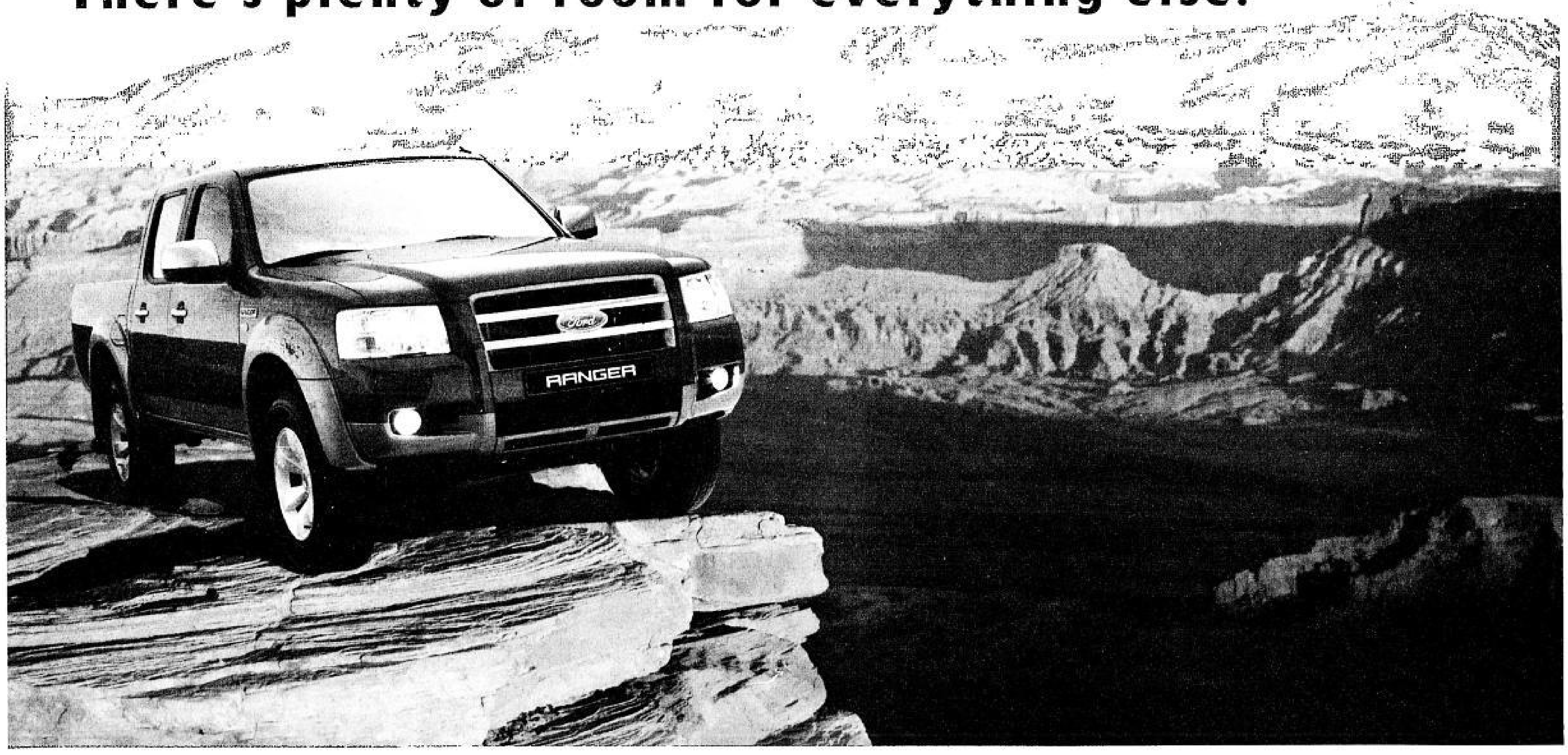

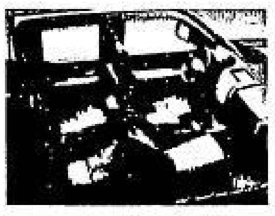

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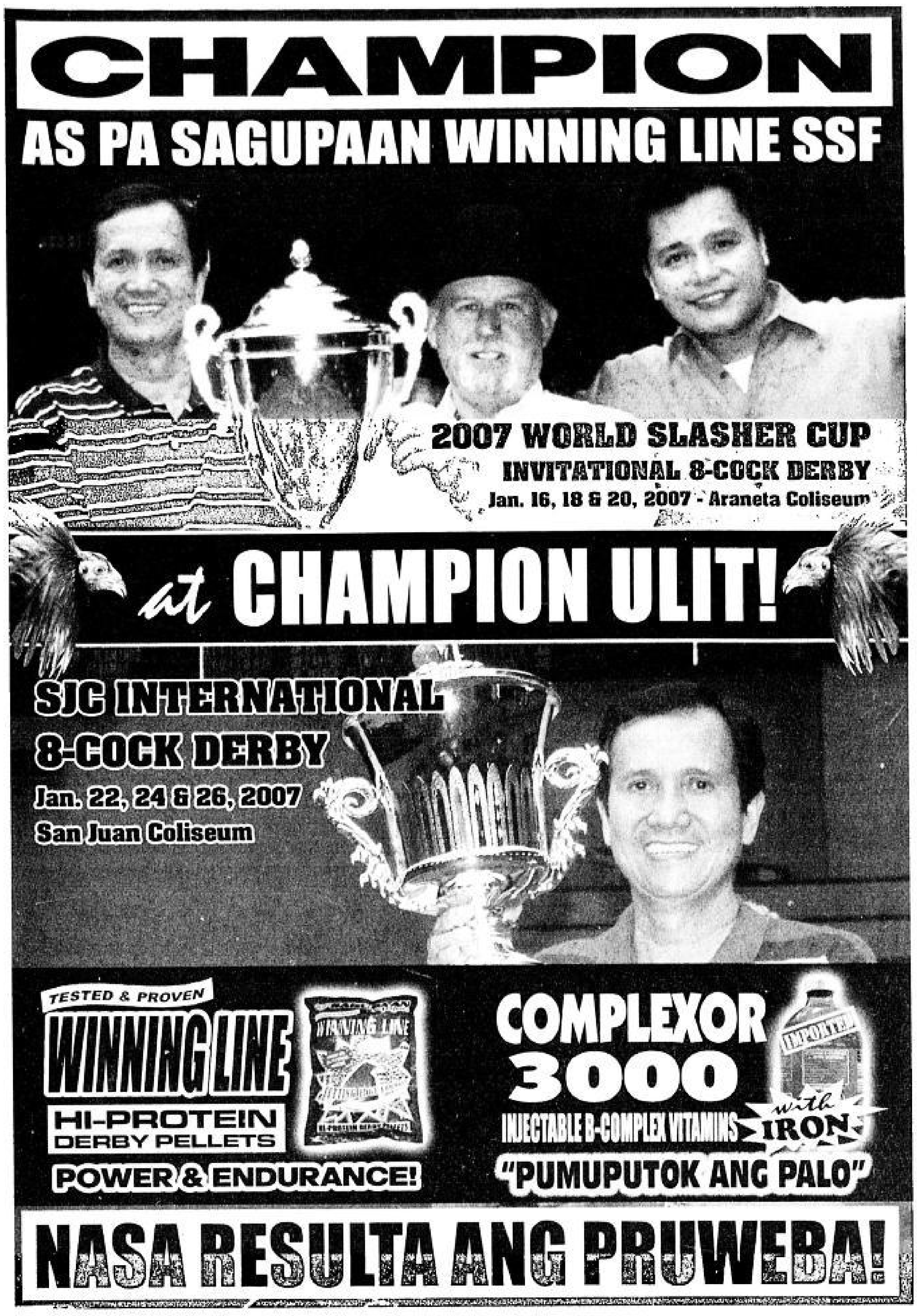

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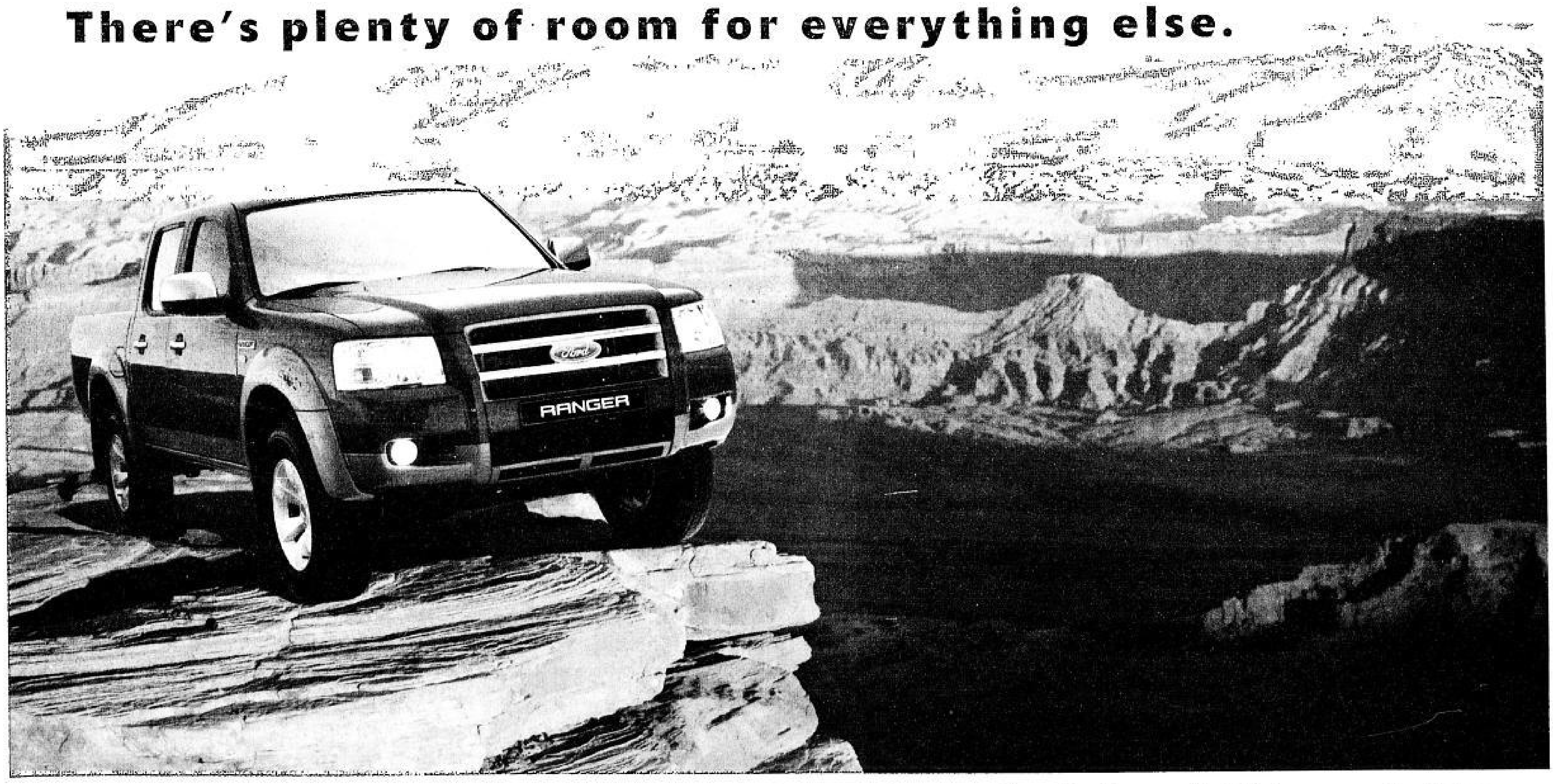

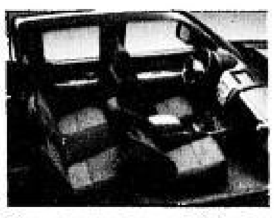
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BSP clears $600M in loans from China

Funds for Northrail project, Customs inspection program

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS HAS CLEARED TWO NEW official development assistance (ODA) loans worth $600 million to be provided by The Export Import Bank of China for the government's major infrastructure projects.

BSP sources said the policy-making Monetary Board approved during its Thursday's meeting a $500-million, long-term loan from China Eximbank to finance the first phase of the North Railway project and another $100-million term loan to boost the country's container inspection system.

The first phase of the North Railway project seeks to reconstruct and convert the existing 32.3-kilometer track from Caloocan to Malolos, Bulacan, into a double track. The implementing agency is the Philippine National Railways.

The groundbreaking for the first phase of the priority infrastructure project was held last Oct 20. Based on the latest report by the Task Force on Infrastructure Monitoring headed by Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap, the right of way for the railway project had been fully cleared and relocation of informal settlers almost complete.

Construction will start this April and the project will be completed by 2010. A memorandum of understanding had been signed between the Department of Finance and China Eximbank for the loan.

The second loan worth $100 million will finance the implementation of the Bureau of Customs' non-intrusive container inspection system project phase 2.

In a separate interview, Economic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri said China Eximbank had committed to provide as much as $2 bil-

BSP CLEARS/ B2

POWERHOUSE CAST
President Macapagal-Arroyo shares a light moment with PNOC Energy Development Corp. CEO Paul Aquino (2nd from left) and senatorial candidates Mike Defensor and Rep. Miguel Zubiri during the commissioning ceremony of PNOC-EDC's Northern Negros Geothermal Power Plant in Bago City, Negros Occidental. LYN RILLON

PNOC unit to develop Negros steam fields

By Abigail L. Ho

BAGO CITY, NEGROS OCCIDENTAL—The power-hungry Visayas grid, particularly the island of Negros, now has the potential to become energy self-sufficient as PNOC Energy Development Corp. (PNOC-EDC) pursues projects that will further add to the recently commissioned 49-megawatt (MW) Northern Negros Geothermal Plant (NNGP) here.

In an interview on the sidelines of the plant's commissioning yesterday, Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla said PNOC-EDC could further develop steam fields in Negros Occidental and Negros Oriental to encourage potential investors to come in and invest in generation facilities that could, in turn, harness the steam.

"Negros Island is now energy self-sufficient. It will just have to source spinning and cold reserves, most likely from Leyte. Negros now has the best chance in the country to achieve energy independence with the combined potential of geothermal, biomass and biofuels," he told reporters.

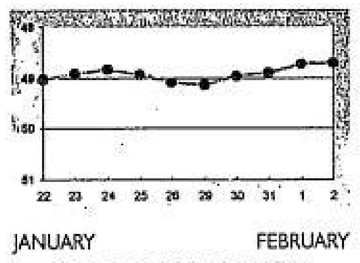
He said PNOC-EDC could work on further developing steam potential in Negros so it could bid out steam supply contracts to investors interested in undertaking power generation projects in the area.

PNOC-EDC information officer Erudito Recio said in a separate interview that apart from the NNGP, the state firm was pursuing the development of 20 MW of steam capacity in Nasulo and another 40 MW in Dauin, both in Negros Oriental.

The $68.5-million NNGP is seen as a "critical" installation in the Visayas grid where 1,498 MW of new capacity is needed to meet this year's projected peak demand of 1,214 MW.

Negros Island alone has a peak de-

PNOC/ B2



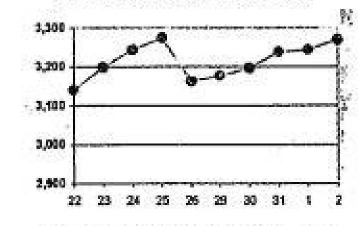
PESO-DOLLAR RATE

P 48.71 = $1

As of 5 p.m., Feb. 2, 2007

STOCK MARKET

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B2)

Shares close higher

SHARE PRICES CLOSED 0.74-PERCENT higher yesterday on signs of better economic prospects this year, dealers said.

Wall Street's sustained rally overnight and the government's smaller budget deficit in 2006, announced Thursday, buoyed sentiment in a market already upbeat about prospects for the economy this year, they added.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index rose 23.92 points to 3,269.18 after

SHARES/ B2

Gov't saves ₱48B due to lower interest rates, debt swaps

By Michelle V. Remo

THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT SAVED P48 billion in 2006 by having to pay less in interest on its liabilities and by undertaking debt swaps, National Treasurer Omar Cruz reported.

He said that P30 billion of the P48 billion in savings were due to the drop in interest rates. He attributed the interest-rate decline, marked by the recent fall of the benchmark 91-day treasury bill rate to an all-time low of 3.1 percent, to the government's improving fiscal position.

Under the 2006 budget of the government, the average treasury bill rate assumption was between 6.4 and 6.5 percent. But Cruz noted that the actual average treasury bill rate stood at only 5 percent.

The government's declining budget deficit also allowed it to reduce its borrowing requirements and cut the volume of government securities it issued. The drop in the supply of government securities, which came with a high level of market liquidity, naturally resulted in the drop in interest rates.

The improving fiscal position of the government likewise boosted confidence of investors on its ability to service its debts, resulting in lower risk premium on treasury bills and bonds.

Aside from the lower-than-programmed interest rate, Cruz said the appreciation of the peso also allowed the government to reduce its interest payments. A stronger peso lowers the value of the government's dollar-denominated debts.

The peso was assumed to average at 52:$1 in 2006 when the budget program was crafted. But due to huge dollar inflows from a strong exports performance and the millions of Filipinos working abroad, and growth in

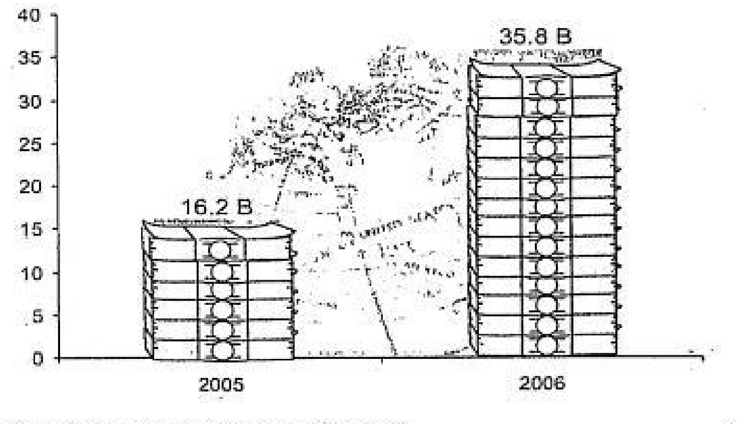
GOV'T/ B2

INQUIRER MONITOR

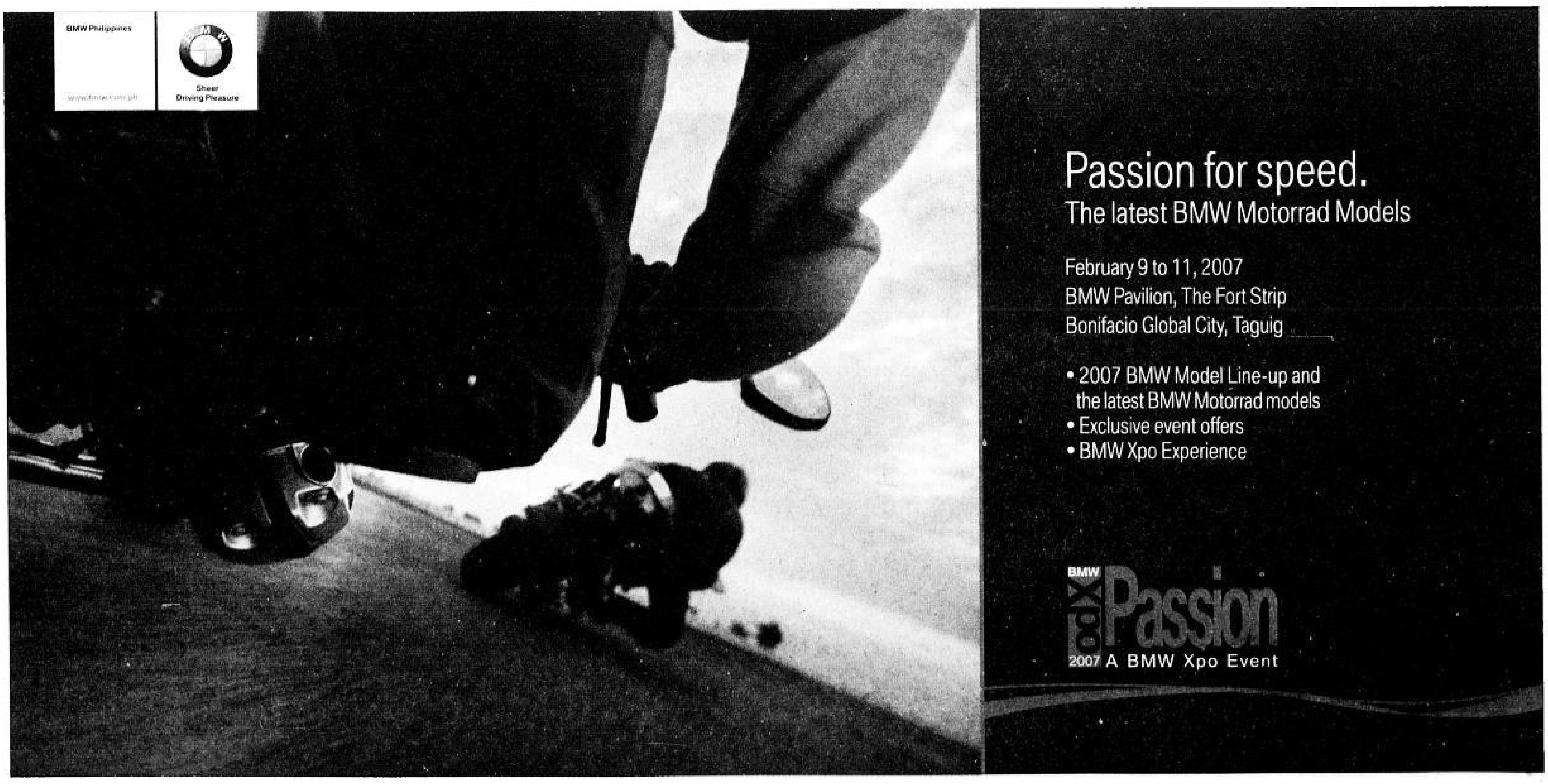
Figures that matter in our nation's life

Total FDIs up by 121.1 percent at P35.8 B (3rd quarter 2006, in billion pesos)

Total approved foreign direct investments increased to P35.8 billion in the third quarter of 2006, up from P16.2 billion in the same period in 2005 due to more pledges from the manufacturing and services industries.



Source: National Statistical Coordination Board
Kate Pedroso Inquirer Research



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SB Corp. raises loan target to ₱5B

DTI unit to share fruits of its effort in sourcing funds abroad

By Ronnel W. Domingo

STATE AGENCY SMALL BUSINess, Guarantee and Financing Corp. yesterday said it would increase this year its loans to micro, small and mid-sized enterprises by about 29 percent to P4.9 billion.

With its funds beefed up by official development assistance loans, SBCorp. plans to set what is "so far the biggest and most ambitious loan origination target."

The loan figure is P1.1 billion more than the P3.8 billion loans it released in 2006.

Of the total loans planned for 2007, P3.2 billion is projected to be released under SBCorp.'s wholesale lending program; P700 million through the retail lending program; P500 million under the microfinance program; and P500 million under the credit guarantee program.

SB Corp. president and chief operating officer Benel Lagua said the infusion of fresh funds from three international lending institutions gave the firm the confidence to adopt more ambitious strategies to increase its lending to MSMEs.

Lagua said the company in 2004 started an aggressive fund sourcing campaign abroad and, in the following year, successfully negotiated ODA loan agreements with the Asian Development Bank, Germany's KfW, and the International Fund for Agricultural Development, which is part of the United Nations.

Lagua said SBCorp. raised a cumulative P3 billion in funds from these negotiations. The ADB has pledged to release $25 million, while KfW committed $14 million. IFAD had earmarked $15 million for SBCorp.

"With the three ODA loans, SB Corp. is now in a better position to increase its loan originations and become a significant player in the SME financing market," Lagua said. "As a result of our successful fund sourcing campaign, we intend to be more aggressive next year in expanding our list of conduit-partners in SME lending.

A government financial institution attached to the Department of Trade and Industry, SB Corp. has loan partnership agreements with at least 71 accredited financial institutions comprised of rural banks, cooperatives, nongovernment organizations and peoples organizations, thrift banks and private lending institutions.

MWCI's income up; ₱4-B capex set

PUBLICLY LISTED MANILA WATER Co. Inc. reported higher earnings for last year due to the combined effects of stronger revenues and greater efficiency in its water distribution system.

In a briefing, the Ayala-owned firm revealed a 19-percent hike in its 2006 net income to P2.39 billion from only P2.01 billion in the previous year.

Revenues, meanwhile, reached P6.48 billion last year, representing a 17-percent increase over the P5.54 billion reported at the end of 2005.

"This solid financial performance is a combined result of the company's continuous operating efficiency improvements and unrelenting efforts to provide better water and wastewater services to its customers," the firm said.

Manila Water president Antonino T. Aquino also said that the improved income level was a result of the firm's P4.8 billion capital investments in 2006.

"This brings our total investments to P23 billion since 1997," Aquino said. "We expect to continue the same level of investment in the coming years. In 2007, we have earmarked more than P4 billion for projects that will allow us to continue our network expansion."

The firm operates the water concession for Metro Manila's east zone after government privatized the service in 1997. To date, it serves approximately 870,000 households in its area of responsibility—a number that it says will grow further at an average of 100,000 per year.

More significantly, however, Manila Water boasted that it achieved "new record highs" in its operating performance in 2006.

Water sales registered its all-time high at 948 million liters per day as of yearend—a 10-percent growth over the past year's level, and the highest over the past five years.

Water availability has improved, with 98 percent of its customers connected to the central distribution system receiving 24-hour water supply. *Daxim L. Lucas*

Market bullish on FLI, says UBS

By Daxim L. Lucas

STRONG MARKET DEMAND for Filinvest Land Inc.'s recent share sale reveals foreign investors' bullishness over the prospects of the firm and the local real estate market, according to the issue's underwriter.

In a press briefing, UBS chief country representative Lauro Baja III said that buyers of FLI's recent stock offer were willing to pay a higher price—and a smaller discount to the market price—to avail of the 5.4 billion shares being sold.

The property developer raised P5.92 billion from its sale of the common shares at P1.60 apiece.

"This represents a 1.23-percent discount to the market, and a 5.78-percent discount to the 10-day weighted average price," Baja said. "This is incredibly tight."

UBS Investment Bank acted as the issue's international underwriter, while its parent firm UBS AG has been appointed as "stabilizing agent," authorized to buy back over 800 million shares from shareholders at P1.60 each—a measure that effectively buttresses FLI's stock price once the new shares flood the market.

Having pitched the stock to its clients abroad, UBS wants to help ensure the market's positive sentiment toward the FLI issue.

Baja also pointed out that institutional investors snapped up the shares on offer ahead of schedule, with the order book being filled up in six out of the 10-day selling period.

He added that the issue was five times oversubscribed, representing "over $900 million worth of demand."

UBS Securities (Phils.) research head Jody Santiago said that the interest shown by foreign investors toward the FLI issue bodes well, both for the firm and the broader property market.

"There is a lot of interest in the property sector," he said. "And we're very positive on our macro economy."

The positive mood, he said, means that more capital is being made available to buyers and developers in the property sector.

FLI is well positioned to capitalize on this because 70 percent of the demand in the real estate market is happening in sectors covered by the firm's product lines, which range form the socialized to mid-priced housing units.

Net proceeds from the offering will be used to finance FLI's development projects in 2007.

The total consolidated assets of FLI as of Sept. 30, 2006 stood at P40.9 billion.

Ship firms stick to double-hull deadline

By Riza T. Olchondra

LOCAL SHIPPING GROUPS WILL keep their commitment to replace all their cargo tankers with double-hull ones by April 2008, an official of the Maritime Industry Authority (Marina) said.

"I have met with Pisa (Philippine Interisland Shipping Association), Philpesta (Philippine Petroleum Sea Transport Industry Association) and Atophil (Association of Tanker Operators of the Philippines), and they have all reaffirmed their commitment to meet the 2008 deadline," said Emerson M. Lorenzo, head of Marina's Shipping Regulation Office.

He said the deadline has triggered increased demand in new buildings.

Each vessel with an extra hull that has a size ranging from 2,500 dwt (deadweight tons) to 3,750 dwt, is priced at around $10 million to $15 million.

"There are currently no available second-hand double-hull tankers because the few shipyards making them are fully booked well into 2010," Lorenzo said.

Local shipyards currently do not have the technology and facilities to make such vessels. But many have begun establishing ties with foreign shipyards to be able to cope with demand, Lorenzo said.

The *Inquirer* has reported that the Shipyard Association of Cebu (SAC) has tied up with the Netherlands' Damen Shipyards Gorinchem to be able to make four double-hull black cargo tankers by 2008.

SAC president Arthur Uy, who owns Cebu-based Colorado Shipyard Corp., told the *Inquirer* that the standard delivery time for double hull tankers with the optimal deadweight of 3,750 is 16 months from the time of order.

2GO sees Ro-Ro boom

NOTING A SURGE IN DEMAND for its Roll-on, Roll-off (Ro-Ro) service, Aboitiz Transport Systems (ATS) unit 2Go has decided to expand the service over the next five years, company officials said.

Under 2GO's Ro-Ro system, the company's trucks go to the clients' warehouse or factory in any major city or province in the country to pick up cargo. The truck takes the cargo straight to the receiving branch or store, onboard a Ro-Ro vessel.

Since launching its Ro-Ro system in mid-2004, 2Go has doubled its container volumes every year, said Mike Camahort, senior vice president and COO of 2GO Solutions.

2GO also noted a 101-percent increase in the number of 2GO Ro-Ro bookings from 2005 to 2006, as well as 658-percent more inquiries for the same period.

Sabin Aboitiz, president and CEO of 2GO Express, attributed the surge to the simplicity and savings offered under the service.

"There are 15 steps in the traditional supply chain using container ships, and just three steps with the Ro-Ro (system)," he said. "The client can send and receive cargo as if it was being transported on dry land, because the truck runs on the road, gets on the boat, rolls off at the port, then drives to the end destination. That's why 2Go calls it 'driving through water.'"

Jerome Santos of 2Go Solutions said the major accounts for the service are Jollibee, Nestle, Universal Robina Corp. and Mercury Drug.

2Go wants to sign up 13 more firms within the year, he added.

To expand the service, Aboitiz said 2GO will be converting up to 100 container ships into Ro-Ro vessels. *Riza T. Olchondra*

BSP clears $600M in loans from China

From page B1

lion in concessional loans to the Philippines each year for the next three years.

He said funding for the government's infrastructure program was no longer a problem as the authorities would only have to identify the good projects for implementation.

At the rate China's interest in the country is surging, he said China could soon exceed Japan as the country's biggest bilateral donor.

Japan currently provides about $6 billion worth of ODA for the country a year.

Aside from China Eximbank, Neri said there was a much bigger bank in China—China Development Bank—which the country could tap for its infrastructure funding requirements.

"The discussions with China Development Bank is not yet too advanced but it's another area we can tap," Neri said.

But while confidence among the global donor community was high, Neri said the Philippines must still be conscious about its foreign borrowing and increasingly shift to domestic sources to fund its development.

Shares...

From page B1

moving between 3,254.24 and 3,278.80.

The broader all-share index rose 26.25 points to 2,050.23.

There were 75 gainers and 36 losers with 56 stocks unchanged. Volume totaled 3.33 billion shares worth P5.34 billion.

"The uptrend continued thanks to a rosier economic outlook this year. We believe the market will continue to move higher, and we have a target of 3,600 points for the main index this year," said Ron Rodrigo of Unicapital Securities.

"The way the market is moving, our target is quite conservative."

Among the index movers, SM Investments Corp. rose P22.50 to P392.50 while Ayala Corp. was up P25 at P655.

Top-traded Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co. extended its rally, gaining another P2 to P62.50.

Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. fell P30 to P2,575.

Food and beverage firm San Miguel Corp.'s A-shares advanced 50 centavos to P64 while its B-shares rose a peso to P76. *AFP*

Gov't saves P48B ...

From page B1

foreign investments, the peso breached the 49-to-a-dollar barrier to hover in the 48 level in the latter part of the year. The peso averaged at 51.31 against the greenback in 2006.

The remaining P18 billion of the P48 billion in savings was a result of the debt swaps undertaken by the Bureau of the Treasury last year on behalf of the government.

Debt swap is an activity wherein the government borrowed at a lower interest rate and used the proceeds to pay for an older and more expensive debt.

The lower-than-programmed amount of interest payments freed up some funds for other government expenditures.

The government had been allotting about a third of its annual budget for interest payments alone, leaving insufficient room for vital expenditure programs like infrastructure.

Fiscal authorities, however, said debt servicing was expected to decline given the government's improving budget position.

The government's budget deficit settled at only P62.2 billion in 2006, much lower than the P146.8 billion recorded in 2005 and was the lowest in eight years.

PNOC unit to ...

From page B1

mand of 205 MW, but a dependable capacity of only 180 MW.

With the new plant now running, Lotilla said Negros would be able to address its 25-MW supply deficit.

The new plant will provide electricity to some 800,000 households through electricity sales agreements with the Iloilo Electric Cooperative for 606 gigawatt-hours (GWh) and the Visayan Electric Co. for 635 GWh.

Power generated by the plant will be distributed using a 25-kilometer line leading to the National Transmission Corp.'s Mansilingan substation.

NNGP is PNOC-EDC's first wholly owned power-generation facility, PNOC-EDC now has five geothermal production fields, including those in Leyte, Southern Negros, Bicol and North Cotabato.

The state firm is the country's biggest geothermal energy producer with an installed capacity of 1,198 MW.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of Feb. 2, 2007)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	7	7	7	7	4,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	53.5	55	53.5	55	2,763,800
Bank of the Phil. Islands	72.5	73	72	72.5	1,204,100
China Banking Corp.	750	765	750	750	36,820
Chinatrust Comm. Bank	29	30	29	30	7,500
Citystate Savings Bank	19.75	19.75	19.75	19.75	300
Export and Ind. Bank A	0.5	0.51	0.5	0.5	8,710,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	93	95.5	93	95	267,300
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	61.5	62.5	61	62.5	12,241,900
Philippine National Bank	48	48	46.5	46.5	65,500
Phil. Savings Bank	50	52	50	52	192,700
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	39.5	40.5	39	40	363,200
Security Bank Corp.	77	78	77	77.5	162,000
Union Bank of the Phil.	60	61	60	61	39,100
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					
ATR Kimeng Fin. Corp.	2.9	3.6	2.9	3.5	165,000
Bankard Inc.	0.68	0.7	0.68	0.69	380,000
Citisecoline.Com Inc.	4.9	5.1	4.9	5	975,000
First Metro Invest. Corp	32	32	32	32	20,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	1640	1660	1640	1650	5,120
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.62	1.64	1.62	1.62	185,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	460	485	455	480	9,350
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2080	2100	2080	2100	2,670
Ivantage Corp.	1.62	1.62	1.6	1.62	521,000
ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
PNOC Energy Dev. Corp.	4.95	5.4	4.95	5.3	69,115,000
First Gen Corp.	59	59	58	59	595,100
First Phil Hldgs Corp	77	77	75.5	76	768,400
Manila Electric Co. A	70	70.5	70	70.5	75,300
Manila Electric Co. B	70	71	70	70.5	4,661,700
Manila Water Co. Inc.	9.2	9.4	9.2	9.3	7,515,000
Petron Corp.	4.45	4.7	4.45	4.6	24,861,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	129,000
FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.7	3.8	3.7	3.8	93,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	23.25	26.5	23.25	25	578,900
Jollibee Foods Corp.	42.5	44.5	42.5	44.5	1,945,200
RFM Corp.	1.38	1.44	1.38	1.44	1,770,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	104,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.41	0.41	0.41	0.41	160,000
San Miguel Corp. A	63	64	63	64	132,900
San Miguel Corp. B	75	76	75	76	151,100
Alliance Tuna Int'l. Inc.	2.06	2.06	2.02	2.06	381,000
Universal Robina Corp.	18.5	18.5	18	18.25	4,617,100
CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
Southeast Asian Cement	1.3	1.4	1.28	1.4	81,745,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	4.6	4.9	4.6	4.75	4,055,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	8	8	7.9	8	7,588,000
Republic Cement Corp.	5.1	5.3	5.1	5.3	1,797,000
CHEMICALS					
Chemrez Technologies Inc.	5.2	5.2	5.1	5.2	4,480,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	0.65	0.65	0.65	0.65	10,000
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
Picop Resources Inc.	0.3	0.3	0.28	0.29	31,030,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	92,000,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	18,000,000
Ayala Corp.	635	655	635	655	1,006,820
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.69	0.7	0.69	0.69	440,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	8.1	8.2	8.1	8.2	12,457,000
Alliance Global Group Inc	8.8	10.25	8.8	8.9	81,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.0725	0.075	0.0725	0.075	33,700,000
A. Soriano Corp.	3.2	3.25	3.2	3.25	574,000
APC Group Inc.	0.39	0.39	0.39	0.39	5,780,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.013	0.013	0.013	0.013	25,600,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	1.34	1.34	1.26	1.28	5,671,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.7	1.7	1.62	1.62	25,000
PAL Holdings Inc.	3.7	3.7	3.6	3.6	265,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	10	10	10	10	13,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	3.1	3.15	3.05	3.05	24,972,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	7.4	7.7	7.4	7.6	4,022,000
Fil-Estate Corp.	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	200,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	5.3	5.4	5.2	5.4	3,141,000
Forum Pacific Inc.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	150,000
House of Investments Inc.	3.2	3.45	3.2	3.3	1,178,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	12.25	12.25	12	12	2,323,600
Keppel Holdings B	1.8	1.8	1.78	1.78	50,000
Medco Holdings	0.35	0.41	0.35	0.39	7,970,000
Mabuhay Holdings Corp.	0.37	0.37	0.37	0.37	220,000
Magnum Holdings Inc.	5.1	5.1	4.85	4.9	1,297,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	2	2	1.92	2	2,190,000
Pacifica	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	3,000,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.195	0.195	0.195	0.195	1,000,000
Solid Group Inc	0.73	0.73	0.73	0.73	190,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.16	0.165	0.155	0.16	11,090,000
SM Investments Corp.	370	395	370	392.5	488,660
South China Resources Inc	1.04	1.04	1.04	1.04	68,000
Vivant Corp.	1.16	1.24	1.16	1.2	14,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.135	0.135	0.135	0.135	550,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	17.5	17.75	17	17.25	12,140,400
Araneta Properties Inc.	0.49	0.49	0.46	0.46	270,000
Belle Corp.	1.22	1.24	1.22	1.22	5,054,000
A Brown Company Inc.	1.98	1.98	1.44	1.46	41,513,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.48	0.48	0.48	0.48	1,370,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	3.5	3.6	3.5	3.6	1,508,000
C & P Homes Inc.	1.88	1.88	1.86	1.86	195,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.3	0.33	0.3	0.32	3,550,000
EIB Realty Developers Inc	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	500,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.77	0.77	0.75	0.76	58,060,000
Edsa Prop. Holdings Inc.	1.68	1.68	1.68	1.68	185,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.065	0.065	0.0625	0.065	7,300,000
Gotesco Land Inc.	0.19	0.2	0.19	0.2	530,000
Gotesco Land Inc. B	0.195	0.195	0.195	0.195	240,000
Interport Res.	0.0095	0.01	0.0095	0.01	489,000,000
Interport Res. B	0.0095	0.011	0.0095	0.01	429,000,000
Keppel Phils. Prop. Inc.	1.66	1.66	1.66	1.66	19,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.54	0.54	0.52	0.52	2,270,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.85	0.86	0.84	0.84	8,640,000
Megaworld Corp.	2.85	2.85	2.7	2.8	57,476,000
Metro Pacific Inv. Corp.	4.8	5.2	4.8	5.1	250,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.19	0.19	0.19	0.19	3,500,000
Polar Property Holdings	2.04	2.04	2.02	2.02	17,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	16.5	18	16.5	17.75	12,708,400
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.66	0.66	0.64	0.64	15,320,000
SM Development Corp.	3.65	3.9	3.65	3.85	5,820,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	12.5	13	12.25	12.5	8,056,200
Suntrust Home Dev. Inc.	0.61	0.62	0.61	0.62	210,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	4,100,000
MEDIA					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp	22.75	23.25	22.75	23.25	188,400
TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc	1.92	1.94	1.92	1.94	10,782,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	1420	1420	1410	1410	30,800
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	6.7	6.8	6.7	6.8	7,148,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	2605	2605	2570	2575	116,240
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.35	0.35	0.32	0.33	14,400,000
Diversified Fin. Network	2.55	2.55	2.5	2.5	37,000
Imperial Res.	0.021	0.022	0.021	0.021	8,000,000
Ionics Inc.	2.85	2.85	2.8	2.85	1,207,000
IPVG Corp.	3.75	3.85	3.75	3.85	25,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.055	0.055	0.055	0.055	8,200,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.0575	0.06	0.0575	0.0575	8,300,000
Music Semiconductors Corp	1.3	1.3	1.28	1.28	142,000
Transpacific Broadband	2.3	2.34	2.28	2.3	257,000
Philweb Corp.	0.036	0.036	0.035	0.036	128,700,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.1	14,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	24	24	24	24	254,000
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.99	0.99	0.96	0.99	710,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	20,000
HOTEL & LEISURE					
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	2.06	2.06	2.04	2.06	4,548,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	420,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.64	0.66	0.64	0.65	3,510,000
EDUCATION					
Ipeople Inc.	3.1	3.25	3.1	3.2	253,000
DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
Easycall Phils. Inc.-Com	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.6	3,000
Macroasia Corp.	2.06	2.06	2.04	2.04	732,000
Paxys Inc.	24.25	24.25	24.25	24.25	658,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	5.6	5.7	5.5	5.5	1,840,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	5.8	5.8	5.5	5.6	315,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.011	0.012	0.011	0.012	55,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	9.3	9.4	9.3	9.4	1,378,000
Benguet Corp. A	12.5	13	12	12.5	567,300
Geograce Res. Phil. Inc.	0.8	0.84	0.8	0.84	64,970,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	8,290,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	5,310,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.025	0.025	0.024	0.025	291,800,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.028	0.028	0.027	0.028	367,900,000
Omico Corp.	0.013	0.013	0.012	0.013	78,100,000
Philex Mining Corp.	3.95	4.15	3.95	4.05	15,907,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	18.5	18.75	18.5	18.5	173,700
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.77	0.77	0.76	0.76	220,000
Vulcan Ind'l	1.56	1.56	1.48	1.5	4,219,000
OIL					
Basic Petroleum Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	3,080,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.012	0.013	0.012	0.012	8,100,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.013	0.013	0.013	0.013	13,400,000
The Philodrill Corp.	0.012	0.013	0.012	0.012	505,500,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	10.5	10.5	10.25	10.25	140,600

CURRENCIES

February 2, 2007 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.767695	1.000000	48.7810
Japan	Yen	0.006358	0.008282	0.4040
United Kingdom	Pound	1.510517	1.967600	95.9815
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.098373	0.128141	6.2508
Switzerland	Franc	0.617466	0.804311	39.2351
Canada	Dollar	0.651362	0.848464	41.3889
Singapore	Dollar	0.500616	0.652103	31.8102
Australia	Dollar	0.594330	0.774174	37.7650
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.036327	2.652520	129.3926
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.204697	0.266638	13.0069
Brunei	Dollar	0.498990	0.649984	31.7069
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000084	0.000110	0.0054
Thailand	Baht	0.022060	0.028736	1.4018
UAE	Dirham	0.209039	0.272294	13.2828
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.302600	63.5421
Korea	Won	0.000820	0.001068	0.0521
China	Yuan**	0.098949	0.128891	6.2874
Argentina	Peso	0.247444	0.322321	15.7231
Brazil	Real	0.364579	0.474901	23.1661
Denmark	Kroner	0.134133	0.174721	8.5231
India	Rupee	0.017444	0.022722	1.1084
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.219341	0.285714	13.9374
Mexico	New Peso	0.069988	0.091166	4.4472
New Zealand	Dollar	0.523167	0.681477	33.2431
South Africa	Rand	0.106698	0.138985	6.7798
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.023369	0.030441	1.4849

Source: Reuters' forex closing prices as of NY Time—Feb. 01, 2007

* Various banks in Bahrain as quoted in Reuters' Screen.

** Asian time closing rate as of Feb. 01, 2007

Fed rate cut? Investors spy inflation in hot assets

NEW YORK—FEDERAL RESERVE chair Ben Bernanke and his colleagues signaled last Wednesday that they were now more optimistic about US inflation pressures ebbing, but that does not necessarily imply interest-rate cuts soon.

While the pace of price gains for goods and services may be relatively contained, a growing chorus of economists and investors are observing that price gains in financial assets is telling a different story.

In fact, asset prices, from the Dow Jones Industrials Average to high-yield "junk" bonds, have climbed impressively recently.

Perhaps too much so.

It's not just the Dow setting another record on Thursday at 12,667.03, nor the Russell 2000 index of small companies keeping pace with a fresh life-time high of its own at 807.13.

Last week, the average spread on US junk bonds over safe-haven US Treasuries fell to 270 basis points, the tightest since July 29, 1997, according to Merrill Lynch.

Looking further afield, emerging market debt spreads over US Treasury bonds hit a record low of 166 basis points the previous week, according to JP Morgan's EMBI+ Index.

Brazil's portion of the index also reached an all-time low as it narrowed 7 basis points to 186 basis points.

All of which suggests that, despite the lagged effects of interest rate rises, there is still a glut of liquidity in the financial system.

"This has got to be entering into the Fed's thinking—and is a very good reason for policy makers not to ease any time soon," said Mark Zandi, chief economist of Moody's Economy.com in West Chester, Pennsylvania.

Persistently low bond yields have fueled a ferocious hunt for higher returns, and driven corporate credit spreads still tighter, but historically low bond yields also suggest investors are underpricing risk.

That is "not necessarily sustainable" for global financial markets, European Central Bank President Jean-Claude Trichet warned last weekend at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

Even the manager of the world's largest bond fund is worried.

Bill Gross, chief investment officer at Pacific Investment Management Co., told Reuters this week that "The Fed is focused not on inflation as they loudly proclaim—that battle is being won—but on risk assets and risk spreads."

On Wednesday, the Fed's policy-setting Open Market Committee voted unanimously to keep benchmark rates at 5.25 percent for a fifth consecutive meeting.

In its statement announcing the decision, policy makers expressed growing confidence that inflation was tracking lower, even though economic growth was "somewhat firmer" than officials had expected just a few months ago.

But the Fed's comfort level on inflation appears more worrisome when looking at inflation in asset prices.

These days, liquidity that normally would flow into consumption of good and services has been diverted partially to financial market consumption, said Tom Sowanick, chief investment officer at Clearbrook Financial LLC in Princeton, N.J. *Reuters*

OIL
TERROR-FREE SUPER 2.19 9/10
TERROR-FREE UNLEADED 2.29 9/10
TERROR-FREE PREMIUM 2.39 9/10
Unleaded Plus 2.1
Unleaded 2.2
Premium Unleaded

A GAS station associated with the Terror Free Oil Initiative opened last Thursday in Omaha, Neb. The group's objective is to encourage Americans to buy gasoline that originated from countries that do not finance terrorism. AP

Asian shares record peaks

Nikkei at 6-yr high; India, Australia up

SINGAPORE—ASIA SHARES RACED higher on Friday, with Japan's Nikkei hitting a six-year peak and record highs in Australia, India and Singapore, as optimism grows about corporate earnings and the strength of demand for Asian goods.

Tech stocks such as Samsung Electronics were favored after data showed a solid rise in US consumer spending—good news for the exporters that power many Asian economies. Property stocks led gains in Japan and Hong Kong.

The dollar was steady, nursing the previous day's losses, as investors awaited monthly US jobs data due later on Friday and looked out for more comments on the weak yen before a Group of Seven meeting of rich countries' finance ministers next week.

Tokyo's Nikkei rose 0.2 percent to its best close in 10 months, after earlier hitting its highest level since July 2000.

MSCI's broadest index of shares elsewhere in Asia was up 1.1 percent by early yesterday afternoon.

Seoul's benchmark index was the biggest gainer among major Asian markets, rising 2.2 percent to its highest close in a month, led by banks such as Kookmin Bank.

Australia's main stocks benchmark rose 0.3 percent to its second successive record close and indexes in Singapore and India hit record intraday highs.

Taiwan shares rose 1 percent on gains for tech suppliers such as electronics parts maker Hon Hai. Hong Kong's Hang Seng was up 1.3 percent.

But Chinese stocks bucked the trend, with Shanghai's main index dropping 3.5 percent amid concerns the authorities want to cool a market that rose around 130 percent during 2006.

The dollar was little changed around 120.70 yen, after dipping the previous day when data showed US manufacturing activity unexpectedly contracted last month.

The euro slipped a touch to around 157.17 yen, holding off the peak of 158.62 yen struck last week. Against the dollar, the euro was flat at $1.3020.

Japan's low rates—at just 0.25 percent compared with 3.5 percent in the Europe and 5.25 percent in the United States—have encouraged market players to borrow yen for funds to buy higher-yielding currencies in the so-called carry trade.

Japanese investors have also sought better returns in higher-yielding foreign assets, leading to a large outflow of cash from the country. *Reuters*

Crude oil prices firmer in Asia

SINGAPORE—OIL PRICES WERE FIRMER IN Asian trade yesterday as Opec's planned February production cut took effect and the market focused on the cold winter weather in the United States, dealers said.

Early yesterday afternoon, New York's main oil futures contract, light sweet crude for delivery in March, was up 22 cents to $57.52 from $57.30 dollars a barrel.

Victor Shum, senior principal at energy consultancy Purvin and Gertz in Singapore, said market sentiment has shifted toward higher oil prices.

"Opec's announced production cuts have also started and Saudi Arabia said that they will do their share of reducing supply."

The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, meeting in Nigeria in December, decided to cut production by 500,000 barrels per day (bpd) from Feb. 1, following a cut of 1.2 million bpd in November.

"On the supply and demand fundamentals front, the market is tightening ... Opec is cutting supply. Whether it is a full compliance or partial compliance, demand remains strong because of the late winter weather," Shum said.

"In the short-term, the market is likely to stay in the $55 to $60 range."

Heating fuel demand has been rising as freezing cold weather continues to grip the northeast United States, the biggest consumer of heating oil in the world, raising concerns this could depletestockpiles. *AFP*

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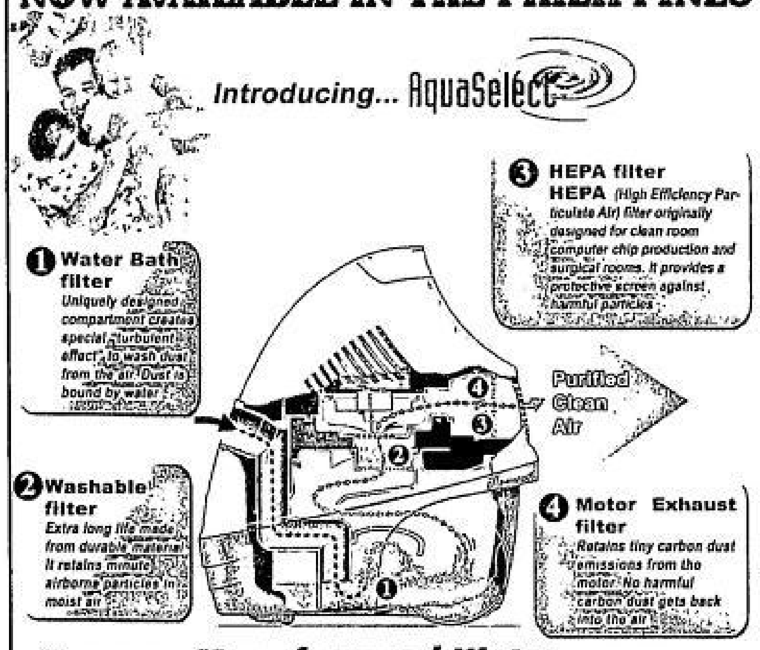
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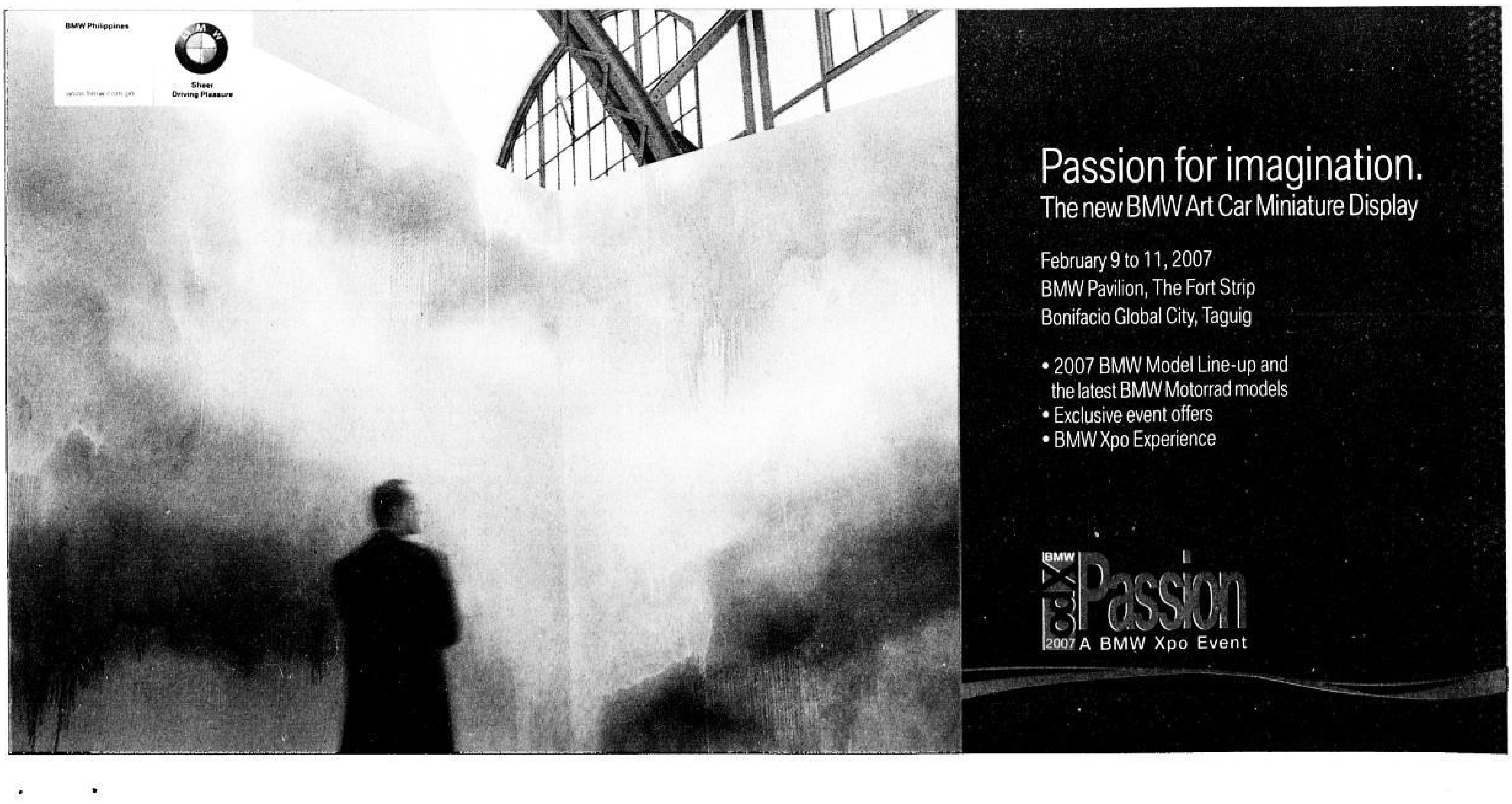

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New diabetes drug found to also improve weight loss

By Charles E. Buban

A NUMBER OF current medications for type 2 diabetes could cause weight gain as a side effect. This is why weight-loss drugs are also prescribed to obese patients who cannot control weight using dietary measures alone.

Since there is a strong association between obesity and increased risk of cardiovascular disease and diabetes—increases in body weight lead to changes in blood lipid and cholesterol levels, predisposing to increased risk of atherosclerosis or clogging of the blood vessels—researchers have looked for drugs that could address both problems.

Among the most promising drugs developed recently is rimonabant, found by studies to produce significant improvements in blood sugar while promoting weight loss in people with type 2 diabetes.

The most recent of these trials is the Study Evaluating Rimonabant Efficacy in Drug-Naive Diabetic Patients (Seranade), which involved 278 patients at 56 study centers in the United States, Germany, Argentina, Chile, Hungary, Poland and The Netherlands.

Positive effect

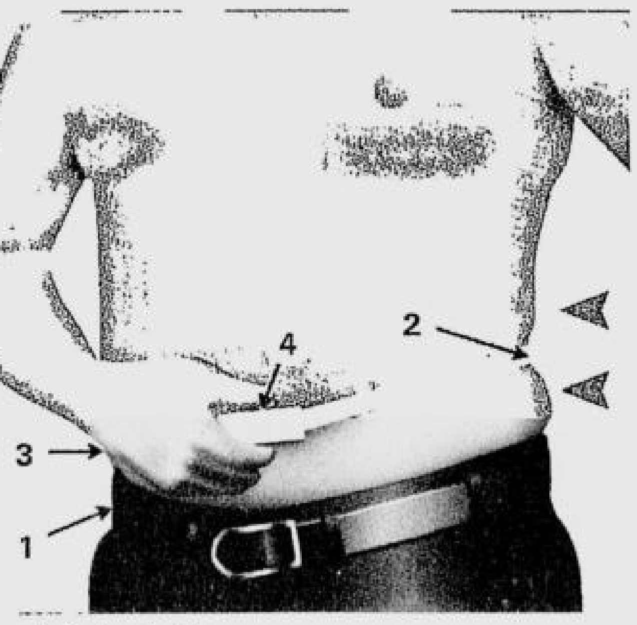
In this particular trial, researchers found that the drug is effective in significantly improving blood sugar levels (50 percent versus 35 percent) in participants with type 2 diabetes and who are not currently treated with any antidiabetic medication.

1 Take off your shirt and loosen your belt

2 Position the tape midway between the top of your hip bone and the bottom of the rib cage

3 When taking measurement, the abdomen should be relaxed and you should be breathing out

4 Record the measurement



INDIVIDUALS with type 2 diabetes must also watch their waistline.

The Serenade also reported benefits beyond improving blood sugar levels including reducing weight and waist circumference, and improving other cardiometabolic risk factors such as bad cholesterol and triglyceride levels.

"The management of type 2 diabetes should not only focus on controlling blood sugar levels but also in improving other risk factors such as weight, good and bad cholesterol, triglycerides and blood pressure. The results shown in the Serenade is indeed very promising," said Dr. Alma Casareo, medical director of Sanofi-Aventis, the pharmaceutical giant that discovered and developed rimonabant.

First of its kind

Rimonabant is the first of its kind in the class of drugs known as selective cannabinoid type 1 (CB1) blockers.

"The CB1 receptors are believed to play a role in controlling food consumption and the phenomena of dependence and habituation. Compounds with potential to inhibit the activity of this receptor were then screened, in which rimonabant emerged as the most promising," Casareo related.

She said the development of drugs that address type 2 diabetes and obesity is very important considering that currently more than 194 million adults or 5 percent of adults worldwide have been diagnosed with diabetes, with type 2 diabetes constituting 85 percent to 95 percent of these diagnoses.

90 percent

"Approximately 90 percent of type 2 diabetes is attributed to people being overweight or obese and worldwide, diabetes is among the leading causes of blindness, renal failure and lower limb amputation, as well as death through its effects on cardiovascular disease (70 to 80 percent of people with diabetes die of cardiovascular disease)," Casareo said.

Rimonabant was approved as an adjunct to diet and exercise for the treatment of obese patients or overweight patients with associated risk factors, such as type 2 diabetes or dyslipidemia in the United Kingdom, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Norway, Ireland, Austria and in Argentina, where it is known as Acomplia.

The drug is still awaiting approval in the United States as well as in the Philippines, however.

Protect our heart

EUREKA!

Queena N. Lee-Chua

ACCORDING TO THE 2003-2004 National Nutrition and Health Survey, four out of every 10 Filipino adults who are 50 years old and above have experienced heart attacks or strokes, including symptoms such as sudden weakening, numbness and slurring. The best way to keep the heart healthy and strong is to follow a healthy lifestyle.

To herald the Love Month, let us be reminded of ways we can protect the most important organ we have: our heart. I acknowledge the help of Eva T. Abille, Department of Science and Technology writer, for the following facts.

Diet and exercise

One, eat the right kind and the right amount of food. We need to consume large amounts of fiber from complex carbohydrates such as whole grains, fruits and vegetables. We have to reduce the amounts of salt and fat which abound in fast food and processed foods.

Two, exercise regularly. Aside from helping us lose weight, exercise also improves blood circulation, leading to stronger heart muscles and healthier blood vessels. In this way, we can reduce the risk factors for cardiovascular disease.

Smoking and drinking

Three, stop smoking. Thirty-five out of 100 adult Filipinos who are at least 20 years of age are estimated to be smokers. Strong links have long been established between cigarette and cigar smoking and high blood pressure, heart attacks, and strokes.

Four, drink alcohol in moderation. Heavy drinking of alcoholic beverages raises blood pressure and damages heart muscles. Cardiologists advise us to limit alcohol to one drink a day (for women) and two drinks a day (for men). We are not talking of giant glasses here. One standard drink equals 1 bottle of beer or half a glass of wine.

Stress and sleep

Five, reduce stress. In today's fast-paced world, we cannot avoid stress. However, we can reduce it, or change our response to it. Why can stress be deadly? Because it increases some of the body's hormones, such as cortisol, which in turn raises blood glucose and blood pressure. Many studies have revealed that aside from heart attacks or strokes, people are more prone to colds and other infections during times of stress, because their immune system is down. Meditation may help calm us during stress.

Six, get enough good sleep. Recent research has shown that lack of sleep can ironically lead to increased weight, and also to development of heart disease. A good restorative sleep of 7 to 8 hours works wonders for all of us.

Mighty fruits

Fruits are mighty foods. According to Dr. Maida Torres of the Food and Nutrition Research Institute (FNRI), fruits contain vitamins and minerals to protect eyesight, keep our skin smooth and prevent our gums from bleeding. They increase our resistance against infection, and because they are good sources of fiber, they also help prevent constipation, particularly for pregnant women.

Experts suggest two to three servings of fruits every day. One serving is equivalent to one medium-size fruit or one slice of a big fruit. Moreover, one in three servings should be vitamin C-rich fruits, such as orange, strawberry, ripe papaya, cashew, ripe mango, melon, tomato, anonas, datiles, atis, guyabano, siniguelas and naranghita.

Malnutrition

Pregnant and breastfeeding women are at risk for malnutrition because of increased nutrient needs, such as protein, folate, iron, calcium and iodine which are needed by the fetus or the baby.

During pregnancy, the mother's nutrient reserves will usually be depleted if her food intake is inadequate. The growing fetus uses the mother's reserves to protect itself, but often at risk to the mother's health. Inadequate nutrition may result in low birth weight, less than 2.5 kilograms.

During breastfeeding, a good diet is required for continuous milk supply to meet the baby's needs for around six months.

However, a survey conducted by the FNRI reveals that Filipino pregnant and breastfeeding women eat less than what is required. In fact, all nutrients (except for niacin) are below recommended levels. According to Mildred O. Guirindola, "The results demand urgent action on the alarming dietary intake of Filipino women... The government needs to intensify information and education campaigns on healthy pregnancy and breastfeeding at the community level."

* * *

Queena N. Lee-Chua is a professor of mathematics and psychology at the Ateneo de Manila University. Contact her at blessbook@yahoo.com.

The science of shopping

DISCOVER

Massie Santos Ballon

PRETEND YOU WANT A COOKIE RIGHT now. Now pretend you just happen to be in a supermarket staring down the snack aisle with dozens of cookie varieties to choose from. How do you decide which pack of cookies to buy?

The obvious answer might be personal preference, as influenced by factors such as previously sampling the cookies, seeing ads for it, and having friends recommend the product. Another answer would be to select by price, as in, do you really want the cookies you had at a friend's party last week if it costs 4 times as much as the cookies you ate as a child?

To help economists—and maybe even product manufacturers and advertisers—understand how people decide what to buy, psychologist Brian Knutson of Stanford University teamed with social scientists from Carnegie Mellon University and MIT to look at how people consider personal preferences and item prices when shopping. Their study appears in the Jan. 3 issue of the journal Neuron.

Virtual shopping trials

Twenty-six people took part in the study, which consisted of two identical virtual shopping trials done a few weeks apart. Knutson et al. later randomly designated one session as "practice" and the other as the "real" trial. In both cases, the participants were given (US) $20 to spend and asked to look at a number of products, all of which had been discounted by 75 percent of their actual retail price and which were being sold to them for prices ranging between $8 and $20.

Volunteers first saw a picture of the item, and then a picture with the item's price, before being asked if they would like to buy it. For example, a box of Godiva chocolates was being offered for $7. Each item was only shown for a few seconds and was not seen again, forcing participants to make their decisions quickly. Any purchases made were actually shipped to the volunteers after the shopping experience.

Previous studies had shown that certain portions of the brain are activated when a person anticipates either a financial gain or financial loss. Knutson et al. designed their experiments to see if consumers would ultimately select a product based on either personal preference or item price. By using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to see the activated sections, researchers expected to see different parts of the brain light up when only the item was shown vs when its price was indicated. Theoretically then, one of these areas would remain lit upon selection to indicate which was the deciding factor.

3 areas of the brain

The virtual shopping sessions showed that participants consistently chose the same 30 percent of the items they saw during both trials. Knutson et al. also identified 3 areas of the brain that were activated: the NAcc lit up when personally preferred items were shown; the MPFC was activated when low prices were shown; and the insula lit when "excessive" prices appeared. The MPFC and NAcc activations matched final purchasing decisions. Interestingly, the researchers found that only the anterior cingulate, previously known to be involved in conflict resolution was also activated when shoppers debated buying an item they really wanted that had an equally high price. However, this part of the brain could not indicate the final decision.

Knutson et al.'s research has great economic implications, given that it could tell suppliers what consumers want and how much they're willing to pay for it. That aisle of cookies might look different if the fMRI data on each product were available, for example. Unfortunately, department stores and supermarkets would find it hard to recreate the experiment outside of the laboratory, given the equipment costs and the need to have trained personnel who can interpret both the fMRI data and the consumer's choices. That would be an interesting shopping trial Knutson et al. could conduct based on their data though, assuming product manufacturers were given the opportunity to make such a decision.

E-mail the author at massie@massie.com.

Spa for breastfeeding moms now open at Asian Hospital

FINALLY, A SPA MEANT TO SERVE the needs of pregnant women who intend to breastfeed their babies is now open. And right in the lobby of a hospital, the first ever in the country.

What started as a personal choice to breastfeed her own twin babies 13 years ago turned into an advocacy work two years ago for Dr. Rebecca B. Singson, founder of the ReBirth Spa, located on the ground floor of the Asian Hospital and Medical Center on Civic Drive, Alabang, Muntinglupa City.

An obstetrician-gynecologist, Singson started ReBirth Spa with the primary aim of "serving pregnant women, especially those who intend to breastfeed their newborn children."

Difficult experience

Having undergone the difficult experience of a lactating mother, "especially since it sometimes would take as long as four days before one's milk becomes available, I envisioned a spa that would provide lactation massage that would ensure that the mother is able to breastfeed her own child within an hour from delivery. At the same time, I also wanted it to provide therapeutic massage for pregnant women with certain difficulties."

DR. Rebecca B. Singson with twins Gia and Gio, whom she breastfed 13 years ago. Beside her is husband Luciano Zahar. PHOTO BY MANDY NAVASERO

Singson's advocacy for breastfeeding started two years ago when she organized the training of therapists specifically for lactation massage and support.

Dynamic fluid

Singson points out that "breast milk is such a dynamic fluid that it is absurd to think that any brand of formula milk can even come close to it. Human milk has over 300 ingredients, including interferon, white blood cells, and antibacterial and antiviral agents."

She enumerates various advantages derived from human milk such as "the increase of the level of lactobacillus that is typically 10 times as much as those of formula-fed infants assuring them of protection from diarrheal diseases, and the presence of antibodies resulting in lower incidence of pneumonia and urinary tract infections." She adds that breastmilk protects the child from cancer before the age of 15.

On the part of the mothers, she cites studies undertaken by Yale University researchers proving that "breastfeeding confers some protection against uterine cancer, ovarian cancer and breast cancer if women breastfeed for at least two years."

At the same time, in response to her patients' needs, Singson also had her massage therapists trained in prenatal massage to provide comfort to pregnant women who tend to suffer from difficulties including neck, back and joint pains, cramps and muscle spasms.

Singson clarifies that her clinic has been offering lactation and prenatal massage to pregnant women for the last two years, but having realized the need for other services right in the hospital, she opened the ReBirth Spa on its ground floor location to make its various services available to the patients, patients' watchers, visitors, doctors and staff.

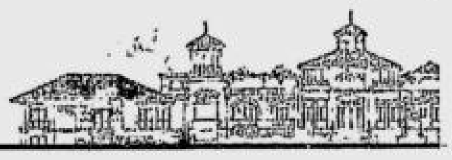
Interestingly, the massage and physical therapists of ReBirth Spa are allowed to visit inpatients right in their rooms. Patients who are not necessarily pregnant may also avail of other services such as body scrub, body massage, body detoxification, foot spa, hand spa with manicure and barber.

International star Lea Salonga, recipient of the Lawrence Olivier and Tony Awards for her performance in "Miss Saigon" in London and in Broadway had twice visited ReBirth Spa for lactation massage and to this day, has continuously breastfeed her daughter with joy. She was the special guest at yesterday's blessing of the newly built ReBirth Spa Salon And Barber at the AHMC lobby.

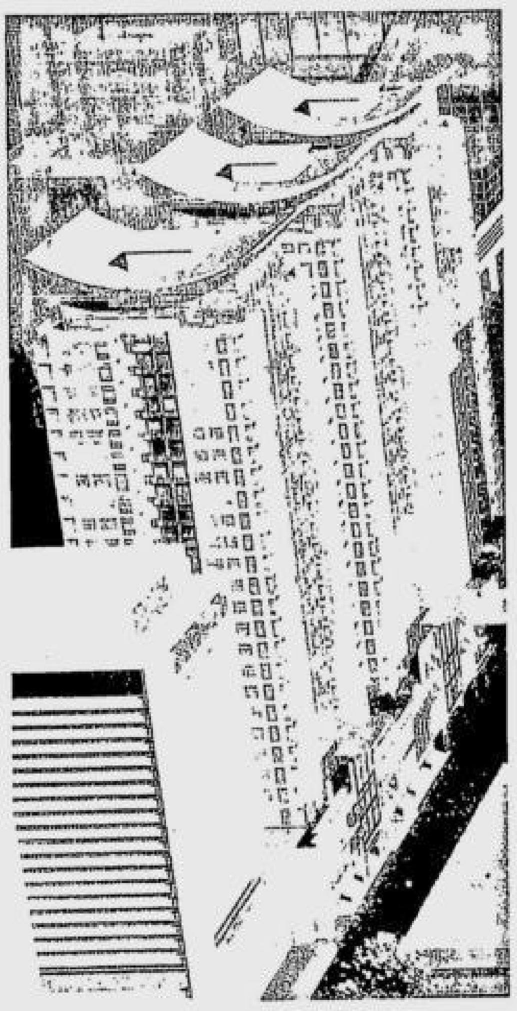
Lactation massage and support on the other hand may be availed of in the hospital or through home service, as far as Quezon City. Prenatal massage is also available in a package of five sessions.

"While we hope to give mothers their total well-being, including the enhancement of their self-esteem, we also felt that pampering our doctors and guests would make for a happy and truly energized healing community," Singson concludes.

PROPERTY



Editor **Cesar D. Mangawang**



THE DISTINCTIVE three towers of the Manhattan Parkway Residence will rise at a very advantageous location near LRT2's Aurora Boulevard station.

Developer benefits from growing confidence in RP property market

By Charles E. Buban

IN JUST A FEW MONTHS, developer Megaworld Central Properties announced it has sold out the first tower of its latest project, the Manhattan Garden City in Araneta Center, Quezon City and is now into fast-tracking the sale of the second one.

"It's overwhelming and the company attributes this very warm reception to what is currently happening in the country's property sector apart from the type of development we will be offering," described Megaworld Central Properties president Anthony Charlemagne Yu.

Yu reported that since the project's official launch in July 2006, they were able to sell close to 500 studio units and one-bedroom and two-bedroom suites in the first tower of Parkway Residence, the first phase of the Manhattan Garden City, which will comprise of three interconnected high-rise condominiums located northeast of the Gateway Mall (bounded by Aurora Boulevard and Gen. Malvar Avenue).

Two reasons

"I believe there are two main reasons for the brisk sales: the confidence-building developments happening in the country's economy and the trust of local buyers as well as those based or working abroad on the country's booming property market," Yu said.

He reported that the country's stock market is now doing very well: the banks are lending at very low rates, and there is strong interest to purchase housing units.

"These are perfect ingredients for our property sector to reach the so-called hypergrowth stage, which refers to the phenomenon of an exceedingly rapid expansion of a certain sector, in this case, the property sector," Yu shared.

Low rate package

Last December, Megaworld Corp. and Security Bank launched Homelite, which offers low interest rates and long payment terms, with Manhattan Garden City as one of the primary projects for this groundbreaking loan package.

"Homelite comes in a choice of up to 10 budget-friendly packages that include the Super Mega Light, which charges a low 5.50 percent interest a year, fixed for five years and with no down payment; Mega Light 10, which charges 8.5 percent interest a year, fixed for 10 years and at 10 percent down payment; and Mega Stretch 25, which charges 11 percent interest a year, fixed for 25 years and at 20 percent down payment. For a lot of homebuyers and investors, these packages are indeed, irresistible," he said.

Strategic location

According to Yu the Manhattan Garden City's strategic location is another reason so many buyers are attracted.

Once completed, the Parkway Residences will feature a five-hectare podium area that will house topnotch establishments. This will complement nearby establishments that are now within the Araneta Center area.

"The fact that the Manhattan Garden City is also a transit-oriented development, that is, it will be connected to both the Manila Light Rail Transit Purple Line or LRT-2 (running east to west from Recto in Manila to Santolan in Quezon City) and the Manila Metro Rail Transit System or MRT-3 (running almost the length of Edsa from North Avenue in Quezon City to Taft Avenue in Pasay City, the project is indeed a train drive away from any of Metro Manila's major destinations," he said.

He also said a series of elevated walkways and footbridges will connect the project to these stations, enabling future residents to traverse the whole development on foot and into these stations without having to go down and cross the busy streets and at the same time ensure utmost safety and convenience.

Overall design

With the fast tracking of the second tower, Yu explained that despite new unit layouts and new interior designs, the second tower will still carry Parkway Residences' overall design concept.

"The towers will reflect the luxurious lifestyles of our buyers as highlighted by their fluid and dynamic designs. The curvilinear profile on each of the tower's rooftop will give these towers dynamic silhouette as well as giving them that distinctive look. The goal is to make them more recognizable as they stood within the Araneta Center," he explained.

5 success factors of energy-efficient buildings

(First of two parts)

GREEN ARCHITRENDS

Amado de Jesus

SUSTAINABLE DESIGN PRINCIPLES are simple, but their advantages are enormous. Green design is not a new architectural style, but a new way of thinking on how to design, construct and maintain buildings.

Green buildings are energy efficient. They do not pollute the environment. They have good indoor air quality and use natural, nontoxic materials. They also cost less to cool and maintain. With these advantages, there is a growing awareness among building owners worldwide to construct green buildings.

In particular, many are beginning to set their sights on the benefits of energy efficiency and conservation. They install energy-saving gadgets and apply the latest technology to reduce their energy bills. Once the system is installed, however, they expect everything to run smoothly and that everything will fall in place. They are grossly mistaken. They forget that it takes more than a sophisticated software and hardware to achieve energy efficiency and conservation in a building.

Energy efficiency can be successfully attained only if the vital elements are in place, starting with the most important element, the involvement and support of the top management. Next would be the proper design of the building, the energy management system, a consistent and continuous improvement program and lastly, the involvement of the staff and building occupants.

Without the involvement and support of top management, any effort to improve or install an energy efficiency program is doomed. In many cases, the decision makers in the penthouse are not aware of or are indifferent to what the technical and engineering staff is doing at the basement. They expect monthly reports about the performance of the building but without a clear objective and clear parameters, they will not know what they are missing. It's like a shooting gallery without targets.

A big developer was asked which among the many high-rise buildings they own is the most energy efficient. He said he did not know. This is the present state or level of energy efficiency awareness that we have in the country.

A strong communication line should be established between top management and the engineering staff so that both technical and financial goals can be defined and achieved. Some goal-setting examples would be to reduce energy bills by 5 percent for the first three months, then 10 percent for the next six months and so on until the final goal of saving, say 20 percent, is accomplished. This would require reviewing historical records so that benchmarks can be established.

Once the targets are set, all the reports should indicate how the building is faring, whether it is catching up or lagging behind. This should be the main focus of the technical staff and when the financial benefits are shown (as in lower monthly electricity bills) the top management will be encouraged further to support and get involved in the program.

Building design

Energy efficiency can be achieved through careful planning of the passive and active building design, as mentioned in previous articles.

Passive design means proper building orientation and envelope design. Building orientation is the position of the building in relation to solar exposure. The building envelope includes the walls, doors, windows and the roof. The active design includes the lighting, air conditioning, elevators, pumps, etc. These elements have to be considered not only to achieve energy efficiency but also to enhance the working conditions of building occupants while protecting the environment.

Energy management system

Energy efficient buildings today are equipped with an energy management system that forms part of the total building control system. This system monitors the operations of all the services within various types of buildings like offices, hospitals, airports, schools and hotels. The system is designed to monitor lighting, air conditioning, elevators and other equipment not only to cut energy waste, but also to improve working conditions within the building.

A feedback system enables information to come in dynamic and animated graphics on the computer screen, and the obtained data are used for maintenance and improvement purposes. If any devices are overloaded for example, the computer screen will give an alarm signal.

Malaysia's Kuala Lumpur International Airport is an excellent example of a very sophisticated system called Total Airport Management System that integrates 40 conventional airport operating systems. It collects data for building management from various parts of the building without the need for personnel to make inspection tours. The building has 5 levels with a total gross floor area of 336,000 sq m.

GRHA Wonokoyo Surabaya Indonesia with 6,660 sq-m floor area, is a green building with high fresh air exchange rate, and high energy efficiency ratio. Its energy saving program includes shortening duration of use of electric light resulting in 33 percent cost savings in one year.

* * *

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* * *

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INDONESIA'S GRHA Wonokoyo Surabaya, one of the winners in the Asean Energy Awards 2006, with 6,660 sq-m floor area, is a green building with high fresh air exchange rate, and high energy efficiency ratio.

Living on love and luxury at Amore of Portofino

LOVE IS TRULY IN THE AIR AT BRITTANY Corp. At the core of this maverick real estate developer is more than just a passion for living but a deep commitment to life and all the joy it brings.

A reflection of this unwavering devotion is Amore of Portofino, an 11-hectare enclave that brings to life all the attributes of true love. If love had a home, Amore would undoubtedly be it.

If love had a home, Amore would undoubtedly be it

"Amore is simply a love affair with the land," said Brittany president Jing Serrano. "It exemplifies what we have all along been articulating in all our developments in Portofino, that is, the romance and passion of Italian living. And since this is what Portofino is to us, it comes but naturally for us to progress to Amore—our latest expression of love and passion in a property development. As reflected in our track record, we have a knack for pushing the envelope further and Amore is another such example," Serrano enthused.

Situated on the spine road connecting the Las Piñas-Cavite-Laguna-Muntinlupa Link Road to the San Pedro Exit in Laguna, Amore of Portofino is a unique exclusive enclave inspired by the rustic Tuscan region of Italy. It sits on prime, fertile, rolling terrain cradled by trees and can easily be accessed through three major road arteries. It is 10 minutes away from the central business district of Alabang and 35 minutes from Makati. Yet within its walls lies a paradise that truly speaks the language of love and passion.

Amore of Portofino offers premium utilities for its residents. To ensure an unobstructed view of the landscape, cables for power and communication were buried underground. Perimeter fences and buffer trees line the boundary lots to ensure security aside from the 24-hour system that safeguards the entire community. Deep wells and water reservoirs ensure a round-the-clock water service. Garbage is collected every other day. Most of all, a professional property management team secures the community and makes sure that the high standards are maintained long after the last lot has been purchased.

This weekend, Brittany Corp. will throw open the gates of Amore, with a grand launch in one of its exquisite model homes called the "Tavola." Guests will definitely be swept away by the Tavola's infinite charm. Each of its three bedrooms has a private toilet and bath for greater privacy. The den can double as a guest room or study. And the family on the second floor has its own balcony, best for enjoying glorious sunrises and starry nights. Just by looking at the Tavola, you will understand why romance resides at Amore.

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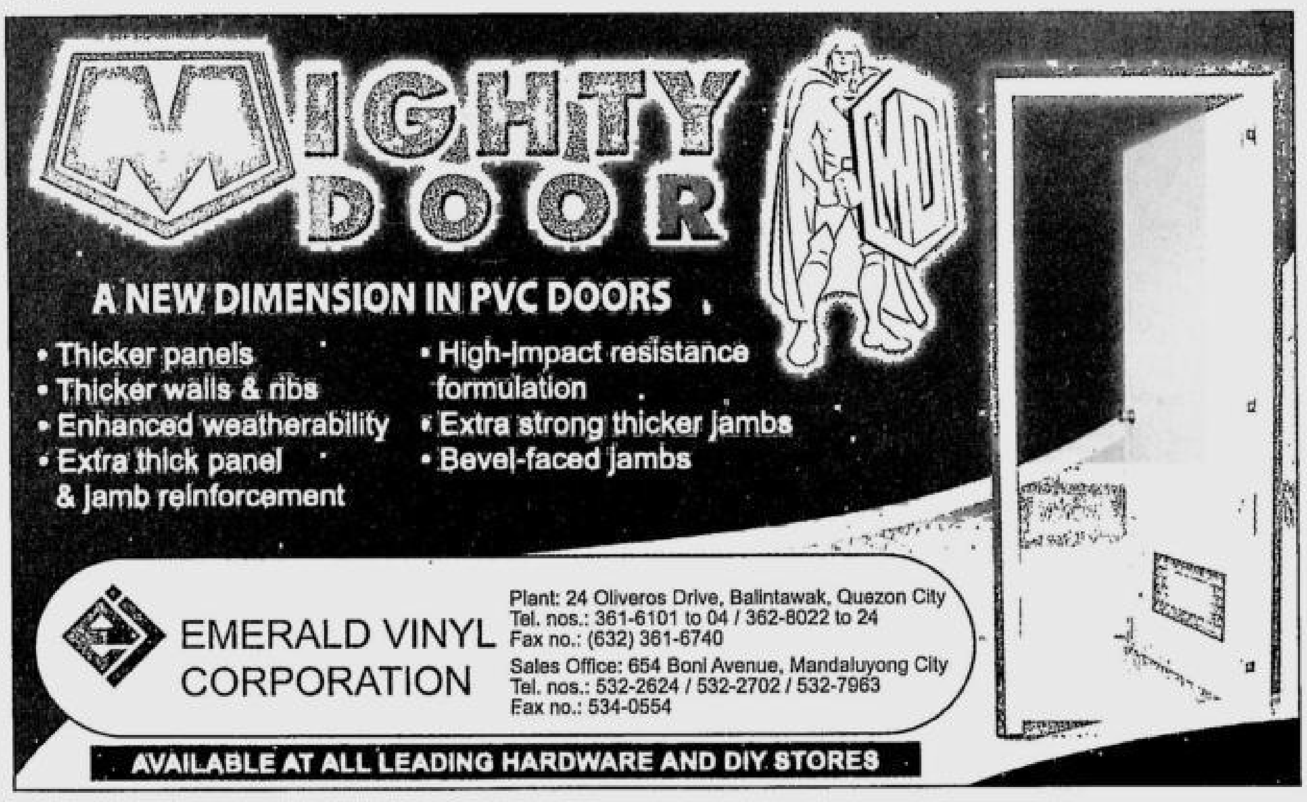

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FILL YOUR HEART WITH GLADNESS AND memorable memories with your special someone on Valentine's Day, as Century Park gives everyone irresistible choices to celebrate the occasion.

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The combined culinary talents of Japanese consultant Yuseke Katayama, executive Japanese chef Shinji Furukawa, Teppanyaki chef Kamura Seiji Kamijo, and Sushi chef Yamazaki Seiko will transport you into an exciting celebration with Century Tsukiji's Valentine Menu.

Formerly Unsui, the restaurant gets an upgrade with exciting selections of authentic Japanese specialties for only P2,500+++.

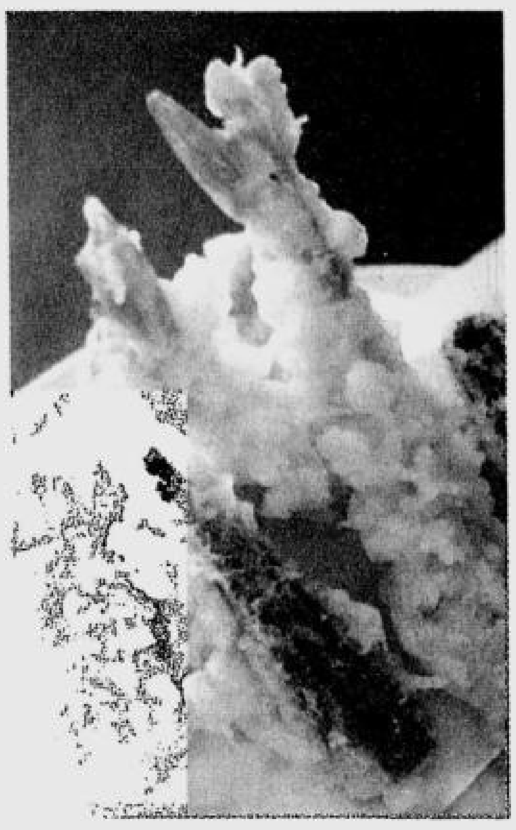
The Top of the Century offers a thrilling mood for romance with a live piano entertainment with the theme "Wine and Dine Your Night Away". The serene and intimate ambiance at the 19th floor is a perfect venue for friends, family, or with someone special while enjoying a sumptuous five-course dinner, conversing, and unwinding starting Feb. 12 to 16.

The Atrium Lounge whips up an amour escape from the hustle and bustle of the city beginning 5:30 p.m. with the Century Strings Ensemble.

Valentine's Day special cakes and chocolates are offered from Feb. 9 to 15.

For inquiries and reservations, call 528-8888 or e-mail information@century-park.com.ph.

Happy Valentines Day!



Last 'casting' call for The Café

BEFORE ITS FINAL CURTAIN CALL ON FEB. 14, Dusit Hotel Nikko's The Café is treating diners with a special buffet featuring their favorite buffet selections highlighting US Angus Rib-eye, Sushi and Tempura for only P650++ per person. The Café will undergo a major renovation, so as it sheds new skin in the coming season, expect only the best and superb array of continental and international dishes complemented by an awe-inspiring ambiance for guests total satisfaction. Guests may enjoy this limited buffet offer starting Feb. 1 until Feb. 13. This is the restaurant's way of thanking its regular patrons through a buffet madness for diner's hefty indulgence. For inquiries and reservations, call 867-3333.

Weekend thrills at the Malayan Plaza

WHENEVER BUSY BUSINESS people need a brief break from all the hard work and stress of the mundane week, a trip out of town is usually top of mind. But nowadays, with the high cost of fuel, the atrocious traffic and the hassles on the road, they may just opt to stay at home.

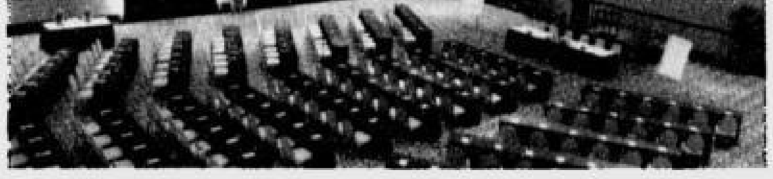
Or better yet, they spend the weekend at the posh Malayan Plaza. After all, this prime property, managed by the renowned Quantum Hotels and Resorts, is quite accessible, strategically located at the heart of the Ortigas Center in Pasig City. It boasts of fully furnished stylish units (studios, 1, 2, and 3 bedrooms) complete with living, dining, and kitchen facilities and equipped with the trappings of the modern day lifestyle.

And from Jan. 19 to Feb. 18, the Malayan Plaza perks up weekends with their Weekend Thrills package. Book two nights' accommodations in a one-bedroom deluxe unit and get the third night for free. Applicable for three consecutive nights' stay, the rate of P9,600/net/package includes buffet breakfast, welcome fruit platter, bottled water, local newspaper and free use of the hotel facilities. This rate is inclusive of applicable taxes and service charges and applicable to local residents only. Prior reservations are required subject to space and suite availability. Check in is 2 p.m. and check out is 12 noon.

For more inquiries and reservations, contact The Malayan Plaza at telephone number: 706-0055; or email Quantum Hotels and Resorts at: sales@quantum-suites.com.

Special Meetings at The Bellevue

THE BELLEVUE GRAND BALLROOM, TOUTED AS THE PREMIER CONCERT venue of the south because of its first-class amenities, astounding versatility and innovative architecture and interior design, is fast becoming a much sought-after location for strategic plannings, project presentations or business evaluations. The Bellevue Grand Ballroom is a two-story structure with an 800-person maximum capacity, featuring high-tech audio-visual equipment and state-of-the-art wireless technology. Amenities of the Special Meeting Package include use of the function room, morning and afternoon snacks, flowing coffee and tea service, special set or buffet lunch, registration desk with message pad and pencil, overhead projector and screen, microphone, whiteboard or flipchart with markers, table name cards, conference pads and pencils and mint candies. For reservations and inquiries on rates, call 771-8181. Hold meetings in style at The Bellevue Grand Ballroom. Poolside Grillery at The Bellevue Hotel. This outdoor buffet gets even more lavish during dinner on Feb. 14 in celebration of Valentine's Day. For inquiries, call 771-8181.



Swept away Valentine room special at the Manila Pavilion

SHACK-UP AND GET COZY AT the Manila Pavilion Hotel this month of hearts through the Swept Away Valentine Room Special.

For only P4,200 net, a romantic urban retreat with a panoramic view of the cityscape is yours to relish. Share an overnight stay in a deluxe room with buffet breakfast for two and a whole day of activities courtesy of the Swept Away Valentine Room Special.

Package includes, free unlimited shuttle ride to and from Baywalk, Star City, Blue Wave and Mall of Asia, Casino Bonus Bet Coupons, 10-percent discount to the Glow of the Orient Beauty Salon and on secretarial services at the Business Center.

And as an added treat on Feb. 13, 14 and 15, you are given the choice between a warm breakfast in bed or a hearty buffet breakfast for two at Seasons. Plus, get 20-percent discount on all F&B outlets and a huggable teddy bear as a remembrance of this memorable occasion. Promo runs from Jan. 16 to Feb. 28.

For inquiries and reservations, call Manila Pavilion Hotel at 526-1212 extension 2343 or 2333.

Philippines' biggest travel and tour expo to open next month

IN SUPPORT OF THE PHILIPPINE government's campaign of promoting tourism as a sunrise industry, the Philippine Travel Agencies Association (PTAA) announced the holding of the 14th Travel Tour Expo on Feb. 9 at the Megatrade Hall of SM Megamall in Mandaluyong City.

This year's edition of the expo dubbed "Gateway to Your Dream Vacation" is expected to draw nearly 100,000 visitors who will be looking to find attractive tour packages, travel discounts, and souvenir items from the biggest travel agencies, cruise operators, airlines, hotels, resorts, and shops operating in the country.

Among the Philippine agencies participating are the Department of Tourism, Philippine Tourism Authority, Philippine Retirement Authority, Bataan Tourism Council, Cagayan Valley Region Ecotours, Department of Tourism Region 1 and 9, Davao Tourism Authority, Panglao Tourism Council, Provincial Government of Bulacan, and the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority.

Meanwhile, several Asian countries including China, Hong Kong, India, Macau, Malaysia, Marianas Islands, Sabah, Singapore, Taiwan, and Thailand together with Egypt, Guam, Israel and South Africa will also have their respective tourism offices present at the expo as they target the traveling Filipinos who are looking for affordable travel packages abroad.

Open to the public for a minimal entrance fee, the expo will showcase various presentations from participating companies, a diving lecture, boudaville show, dance numbers, magic show, and a raffle of surprise prizes.

This year's expo will feature 41 travel agencies; 45 hotels, resorts, and tour operators; 19 travel shops; 17 international airlines; and 5 cruise operators.

The expo is sponsored by the DOT and Philippine Airlines which is also serves as exhibitor and official carrier. Silver sponsors are Globe Handyphone and Globe Broadband; bronze sponsors, Galileo by Travelport and the Israel Embassy; and Air Philippines, airline sponsor. BCS Systems and Technologies has been tapped as the registration systems provider and Team Graphics Solutions as the identification card partner.

Sofia Chua Lim

peacefully joined her Creator and her husband, **Edmundo Bana Lim** †, on January 31, 2007, at the age of 91.

Mother to **Loreta** † and **Domingo Misador** †, **Peterson** and **Sonia**, **Anita** and **Marcial Teng** †, **Victoria** and **Philip Nocom**, **Katherine** and **Andrew Tan**, **Elizabeth** and **Victoriano Sy, Jr.**;

Grandmother to **Lianna Misador**, **Domingo Jr.** and **Ireene Misador**, **Lily Ann** and **Benjamin Mari**, **Dennis** and **Nette Misador**, **Ligeia** and **Jerry Tin**, **Liza Misador**, **Edgar Peterson** and **Candice Lim**, **Cherryll** and **Gerard Yu**, **Edmundo Bana II** and **Sheilah Lim**, **Colbert** and **Jenny Nocom**, **Jacob Nocom**, **Nicole** and **Albert Chong**, **Charlene Nocom**, **Kevin Tan**, **Kendrick Tan**, **Kester Tan**, **Andrea Tan**, **Christine Sy**, **Candice Sy**, **Clarisse Sy** and **Valerie Sy**;

Great-grandmother to **Kristia**, **Daniel** and **Dominic Misador**, **Mattew** and **Maan Mari**, **David** and **Denise Misador**, **Jardine** and **Jarrod Tin**, **Erin** and **Keith Lim**, **Chloe** and **Joshua Yu**, **Erika** and **Enrico Lim**, **Zoee Nocom** and **Tiffany Chong**.

Her remains lie in state at
Arlington Memorial Chapel, No. 12 G. Araneta Ave., Quezon City.

Interment will be on February 5, 2007 at 11:00 am at Eternal Garden, Caloocan City.

The family requests the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

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NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION

In compliance with Section 5 of R.A. 9048, a notice is hereby served to the public that LERIO S. CUBERO has filed with this Office a PETITION FOR CHANGE OF FIRST NAME from ARMANDO to LERIO in the birth certificate of ARMANDO CUBERO who was born on April 10, 1953 in OLIN MAHANUB BAGANGA DAVAO ORIENTAL and whose parents are DELIA SERRA and SEVERINO CUBERO.

Any person adversely affected by said petition may file his written opposition with this office not later than February 06, 2007.

(Sgd.) Atty. Evangeline T. Abatayo
City Civil Registrar

(PDI-Jan. 27 & Feb. 3, 2007)

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- US Embassy
- Insurance Commission

A7

- DOLE-NCR
- Department of Trade & Industry

A12

- DAR-ARCPD
- Pasig River Rehabilitation

A13

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A18

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Sale of state assets fetched ₱5.815B in 2006

Transco bid seen to push through

By Abigail L. Ho

BAGO CITY, NEGROS OCCIDENTAL—AFTER being shelved several times over the past few years, bidding for the 25-year National Transmission Corp. (Transco) concession is expected to finally take place on Monday, with no indications that it will be postponed yet again.

Energy Secretary and Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM) vice chair Raphael Lotilla said the bidding should encounter no more hitches as it had in the past.

"Preparations are proceeding for holding the bidding as scheduled," Lotilla told reporters here yesterday. "(Finance Secretary and PSALM chair Margarito) Teves and I are in constant communication. We see no problems ... with the bidding on Monday."

As in other biddings, Lotilla said that PSALM, the agency tasked to privatize the Transco concession, would not know until the last minute who the final bidders would be.

So far, the government agency has prequalified three groups: The consortium of local firm Triratna Holdings Corp. (60 percent), Malaysia's Tenaga Nasional Berhad (5 percent) and Newbridge Asia IV LP (35 percent); the group of Citadel Holdings Corp. (60 percent) and Terna SPA (40 percent), represented by Rogelio Singson; and the consortium composed of Monte Oro Grid Resources Corp. (60 percent) and China's State Grid Corp. (40 percent), represented by Walter Brown.

Local firm Triratna is represented by SM Investments vice chair Henry Sy Jr., United Laboratories Corp. chair Joselito Campos Jr. and San Miguel Corp. president Ramon Ang.

The pre-qualified bidders, should they wish to push through with plans to vie for the contract to maintain, operate and expand the nationwide transmission grid, will have until noon on Monday to submit their final technical and financial bids.

The national government is expected to fetch at least $3 billion for the 25-year Transco concession.

The winning bidder then has 12 months to secure a Congressional franchise to operate the transmission network.

Gov't exceeds last year's target set at ₱500M

By Michelle V. Remo

THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT earned P5.815 billion from the sale of state assets in 2006, exceeding initial forecasts and the official target set for that year.

Under the 2006 fiscal program, the government's privatization revenue target was set at P500 million.

Also, the Department of Finance earlier estimated that proceeds from the privatization effort in 2006 would only fetch about P4.3 billion.

The revenue that the government generated last year from its privatization effort was the highest since 1998. In 1997, when the Ramos administration embarked on an aggressive campaign to privatize certain state assets, the government generated P9.428 billion in revenue.

Part of the revenue in a given period comes in the form of partial payments for state-owned assets that had been remitted to the Bureau of the Treasury.

The Arroyo administration has adopted the policy of privatizing state-owned assets that it thinks will be better off in the hands of the private sector.

Big-ticket government assets sold last year included the former Manila Gas property, the former property of the International School, real estate properties in Nampeidai in Japan, and the state's shares in Maynilad Water Services Inc. The government likewise generated revenue from the decision of the Philippine National Oil Co.-Energy Development Corp. (PNOC-EDC) to go public.

After six long years, the government finally sold the former International School property to Century Properties Inc. for P1.432 billion. The prime property measures 48,832 square meters and is situated near the central business district of Makati City.

The government likewise sold the former Manila Gas property in Manila to Robinsons Land for P574 million.

The state-owned shares in Maynilad Water was sold for $57 million. The consortium of DMCI Holdings and Metro Pacific acquired the shares and the right to operate the water concession.

According to earlier reports, the PNOC-EDC raised P19.12 billion in revenue from the initial public offering of the government's 5.2 billion shares in the state-owned firm. Of the amount, 50 percent would be used to fund projects to develop renewable energy. The other half would be divided between PNOC-EDC and the government.

In 2006, the revenue from privatization, along with the Bureau of the Treasury's income, totaled P119.35 billion. The amount helped reduce the government's budget deficit to a figure much lower than the official ceiling.

The BTr income hit P73.9 billion (not P51.9 billion as earlier reported).

The national government's budget deficit last year settled at only P62.2 billion, much lower than the P125-billion target set in 2006.

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SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2007

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Super!Countdown

11

C1

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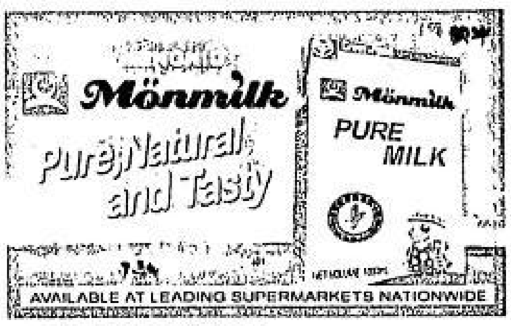
2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

Editor **Pam Pastor**
Creative Director **Tim Yap**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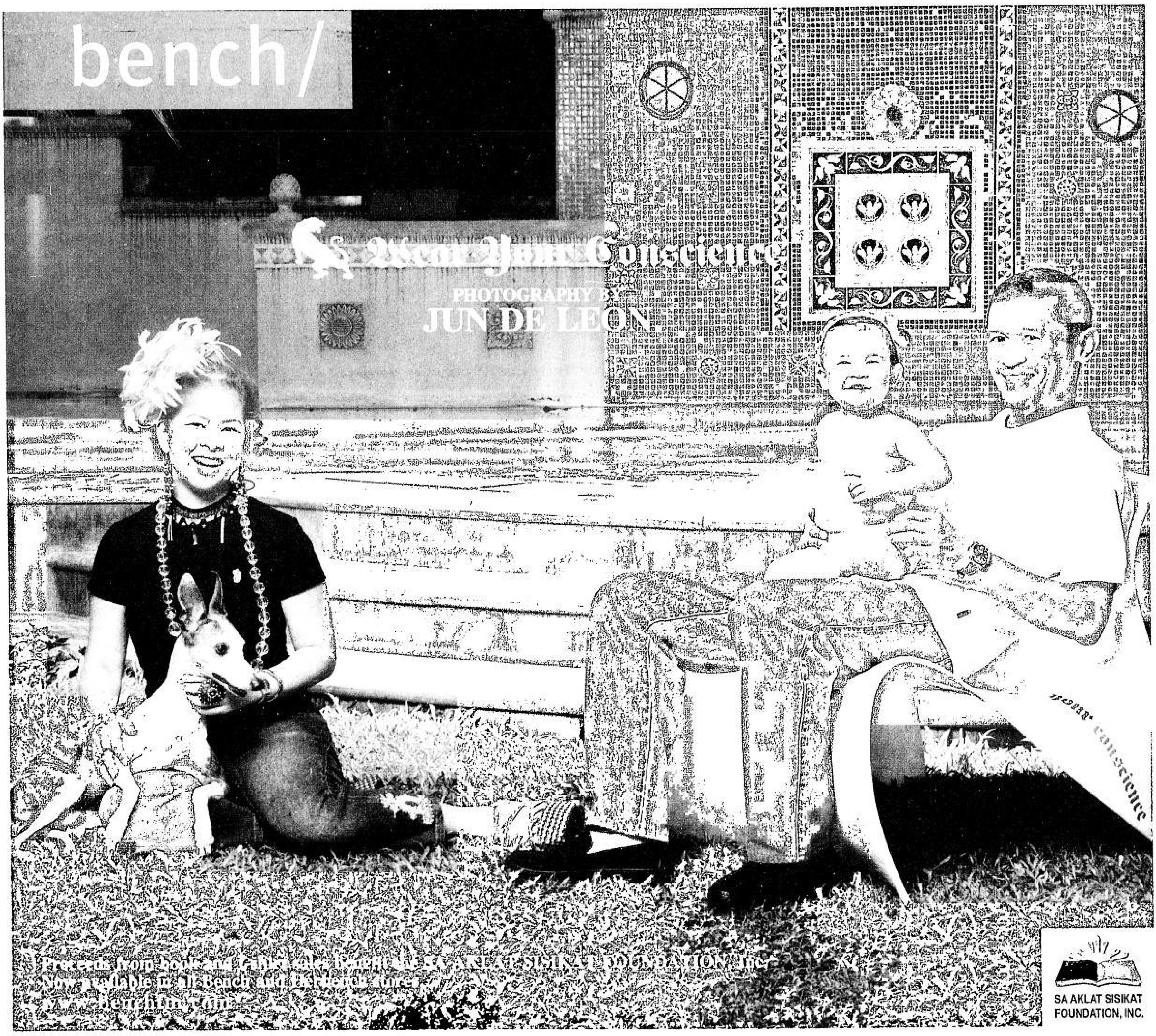
hasta La Vista

Superizing software—the gospel according to Bill Gates page C2

Pinoys in Vegas page C3

Neo Futurist
takes by Dolce&Gabbana, Balenciaga, Louis Vuitton & Chalayan page C7

Wanna see your future? page C7
Go to the Psychic Festival!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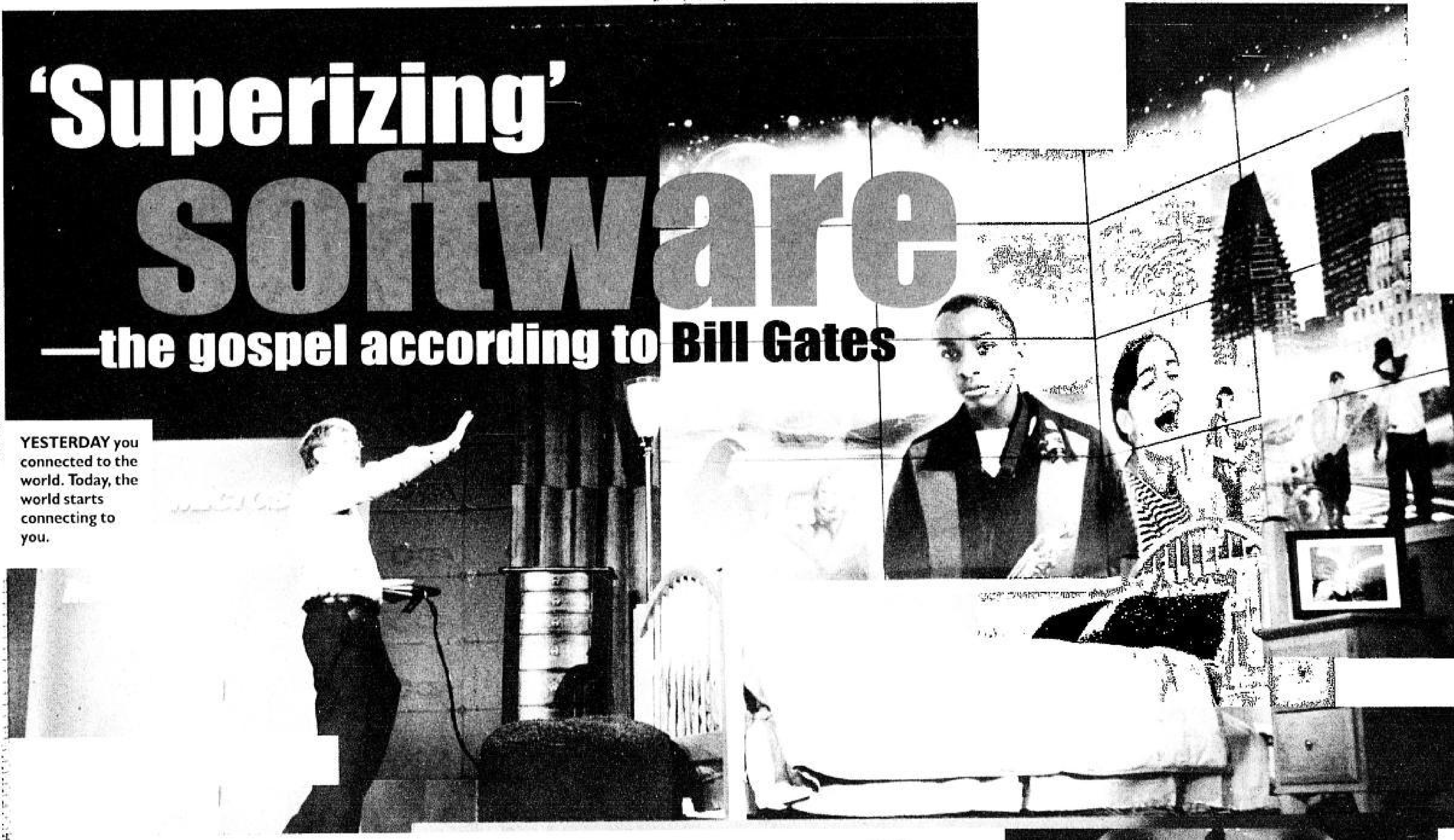
'Superizing' software
—the gospel according to Bill Gates



YESTERDAY you connected to the world. Today, the world starts connecting to you.

According to:

WINDOWS Vista is having its whole-day grand launch at SM Mall of Asia today, Feb. 3. Everyone is invited.

'IT is one field that has the greatest potential for English-speaking, highly trainable IT professionals. This could be the Philippines' best asset in transforming the country into a knowledge center in the region.'—James De Bragga, Senior Director of the Windows Product Management Group, Microsoft

'Windows Vista is about taking things that people are doing today and bringing them to a higher level than ever before.'—Ninis Samuel, International Marketing Manager, Microsoft

'I used to be intimidated by the language of the techie—after adapting Windows Vista into my life, everything became easy. And fun.'—Josine Bustalino, Emerging Markets Manager, Microsoft

TIM YAP bullying Bill Gates.

Tim Yap

UP UNTIL NOW, PEOPLE had to learn the language of computers. Now is the time for computers to learn the language of the people."

I spent my birthday with **Bill Gates** and um, some porn stars. Only in Las Vegas can nerds and porn stars (inspiration for "Beauty and the Geek?") gather together for the biggest (no pun intended) trade fair where the big kahunas (again, no pun intended) of techie lifestyle battle for consumer penetrátion (this time, pun intended.)

Spread across different venues in the Las Vegas strip, the 2007 International Consumer Electronics show (CES) served as a peephole into the future in terms of technology. Giant TV sets, **Elvis** impersonators and bloggable cell phones were among the attractions—it was a gathering of who had the biggest "whatever," a bragging rights fest among those who go gaga over gizmos and gadgets. Right across the giant conference halls at The Sands Expo Center at the Venetian was the Adult Video Convention. So literally, the geeks and the sex freaks were face to face.

Since my experience dictated that I venture into unknown waters, I chose to stay put at the CES venues, at the giant Microsoft booth to be exact. I wanted to fully breathe in this new surge of fun futurism. I used to be scared of computers ever since my Wordstar teacher in high school proved to be a techie terror.

I even used to handwrite my Yaparazzi columns and had a secretary input it into the system. It took me a couple of years before I actually conquered that fear and heed Bill Gates' call as he "changed the world, one desktop at a time."

A new Vista

Las Vegas during winter is a flurry of Cirque Du Soleil shows, **Celine Dion**, and even **Martin Nievera**, but our day one supahstar was none other than THE Bill Gates. Since this was a technology gathering, I was expecting him to appear with space age fanfare, in a hologram version of himself, as he teleports his frame in front of the audience. I was wrong. After a brief video montage of him in various appearances and comical transformations (Bill Gates as **Harry Potter** and **Austin Powers**, among other incarnations—I love him already), he simply walked onto the stage and confidently introduced his latest epiphany—the new Windows Vista.

The new generation Bill Gates is into finding a cure for AIDS and has dedicated his life into making the world a better place and philanthropy. But he doesn't stop at that. That day, he was talking about a new view, his Vista view on how the software giant aims to give us "connected experiences"—a software that allows us to live our lives to the fullest while enjoying every minute with the ones we love.

"Everything is more connected," said Gates as he showed off wireless technology that connects cars, game consoles to high tech gadgets that are easy to use.

Fear not for the future, because Microsoft Vista makes everything—and I mean everything—easier, safer and more fun

"Windows Vista is all about enabling people to live out their passions, whether its music, gadgets or family. It's definitely easier to use, its safer, more entertaining and keeps everyone better connected. In a nutshell, it's simply stunning," echoed **Chay Mondejar-Saputil**, product manager for Windows in the Philippines.

The digital decade is upon us, and we have nothing to be scared about. Scared of too many wires? Microsoft has gone wireless. Losing files? Windows Vista allows you to retrieve your compositions in just a few clicks. Not a good photographer? Again, Vista can make your images look better. In short, a whole new paradigm shift in terms of technology is happening, and it's called Windows Vista.

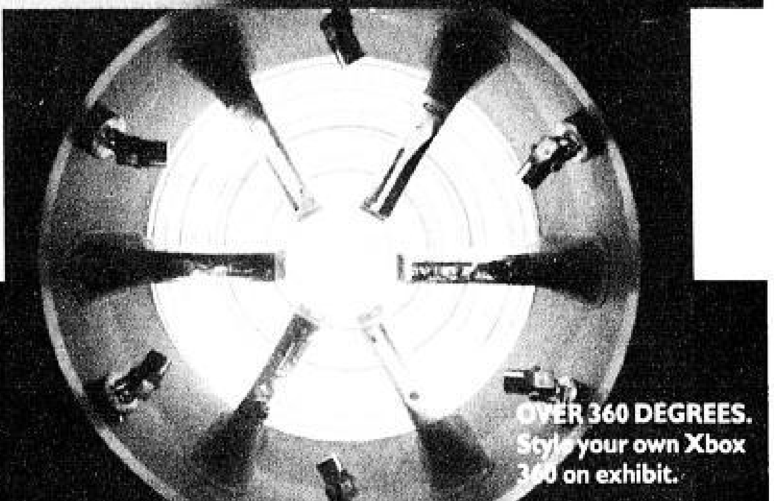
Fun, connected experiences

Whereas computers and their kind were once viewed as solitary enhancement machines ("I don't get to see my kid anymore—he's always on his PC!"), Bill's brief demo of the Vista system had him push a couple of buttons to show how we can be more in touch, more connected. Microsoft group product manger **Justin Hutchinson** then showed off the first-time feature that allows the use of any video clip as wallpaper. They showed us a photo of a magnificent waterfall, which became even more magnificent with the Windows Vista Ultimate touch—the waterfall actually moved! (Full-motion desktops—I bet the folks at the Adult Video Convention will have a field day with this feature. Now let's get our minds off the gutter and back to Gates.)

This transformation encapsulates the vividness of how Vista can improve our home and work lives. Wallpapers that don't move, disastrous vacation photos, lost files and fruitless searches will now be part of the past.

Bill, with his vision of the future then trans-

SUPERIZING/ C7



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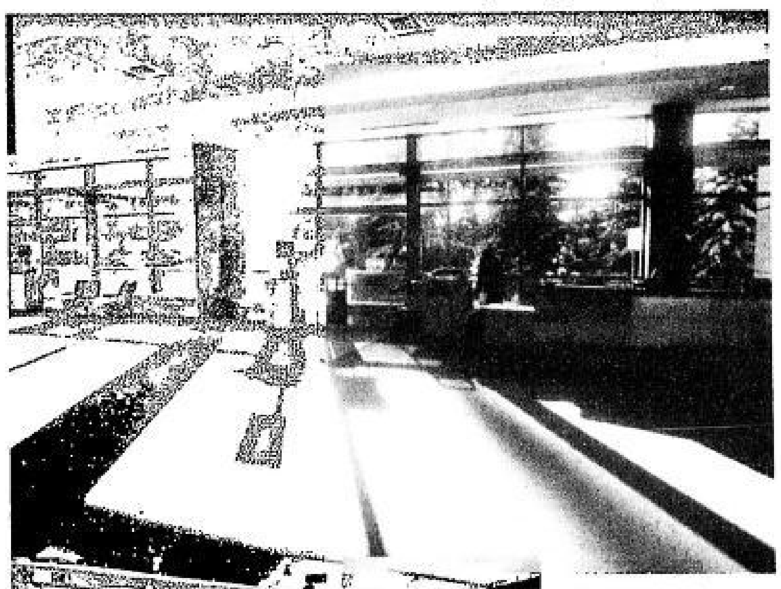
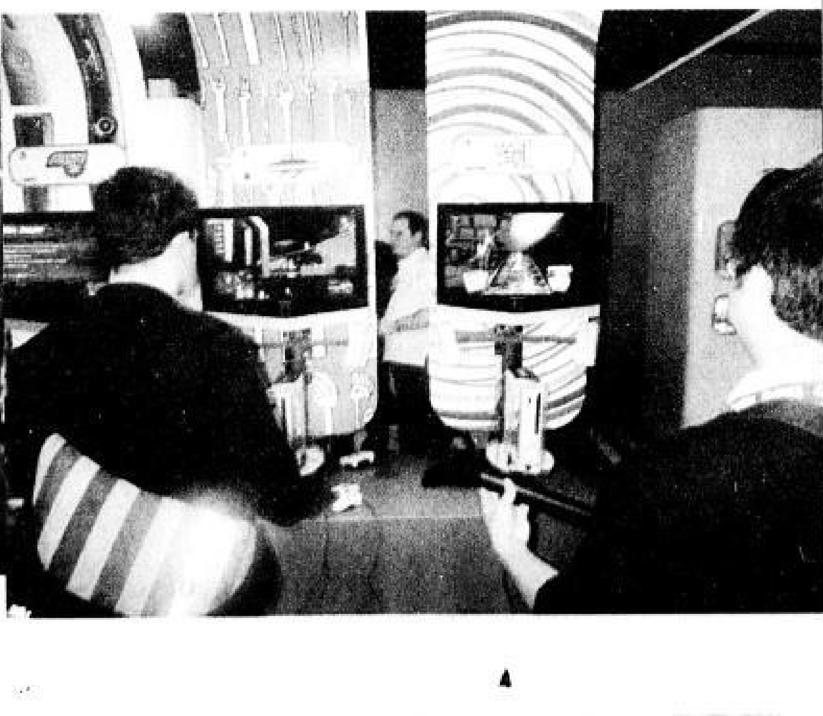


LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE. Sunny and snowy in the Microsoft Campus in Redmond, Seattle.

GET OUT OF MY DREAMS, GET INTO MY CAR. Gamers get the ride of their life.

WORK IT. Super! in the office of the future.



TAKING GAMING TO ANOTHER LEVEL. The playahs are having a field day at the Microsoft booth.

Photos by TIM YAP Using KODAK V710

Scene in Vegas

A VENETIAN WELCOME. This musician was Bill G.'s front act.

WHILE this girl served as encore.

BEHIND THE SCENES. This was not part of the event.

FAMILY FUN. Vegas-based chefs Joe and Geraldine Pangilinan-Tellez and daughter Sophia.

MAIN ATTRACTION: ABS-CBN Karmina Constantino after Zumanity.

CHILDHOOD BUDDY Super Mario is making a comeback.

PINOY VEGAN: My former CLUB TV cohost Laura Jean.

ONE OF the many Pinoys in Las Vegas, Anthony Bernardino.

PHILLY-BASED. Karmina Constantino and hubby Noel.

STAR-PATROL. Igan D' Bayan (who is having his one-man exhibit this Feb. 20 at the Crucible Gallery) with ABS-CBN cameraman Ariel Fulgado.

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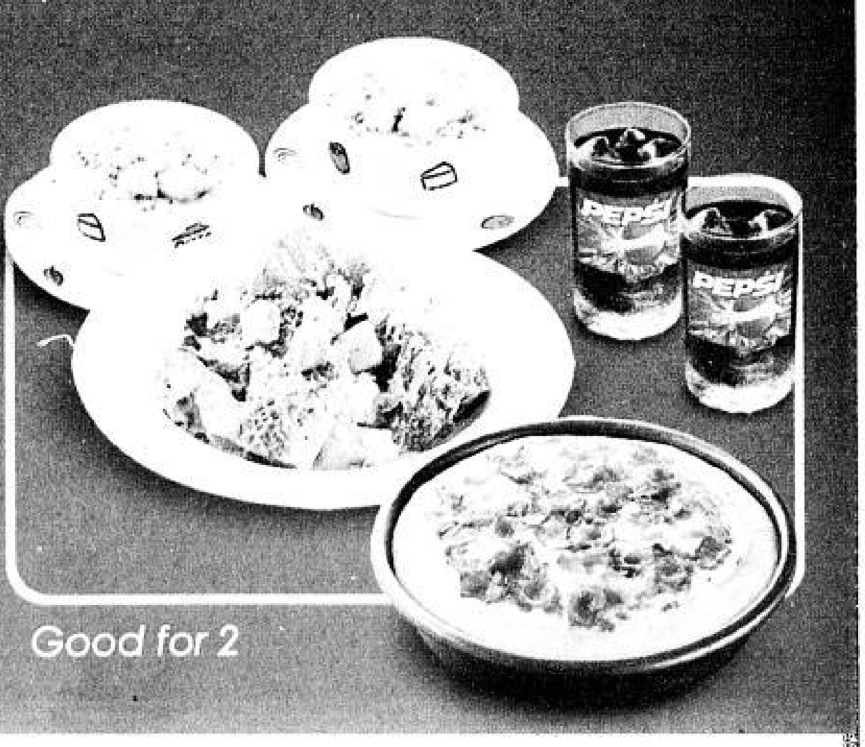
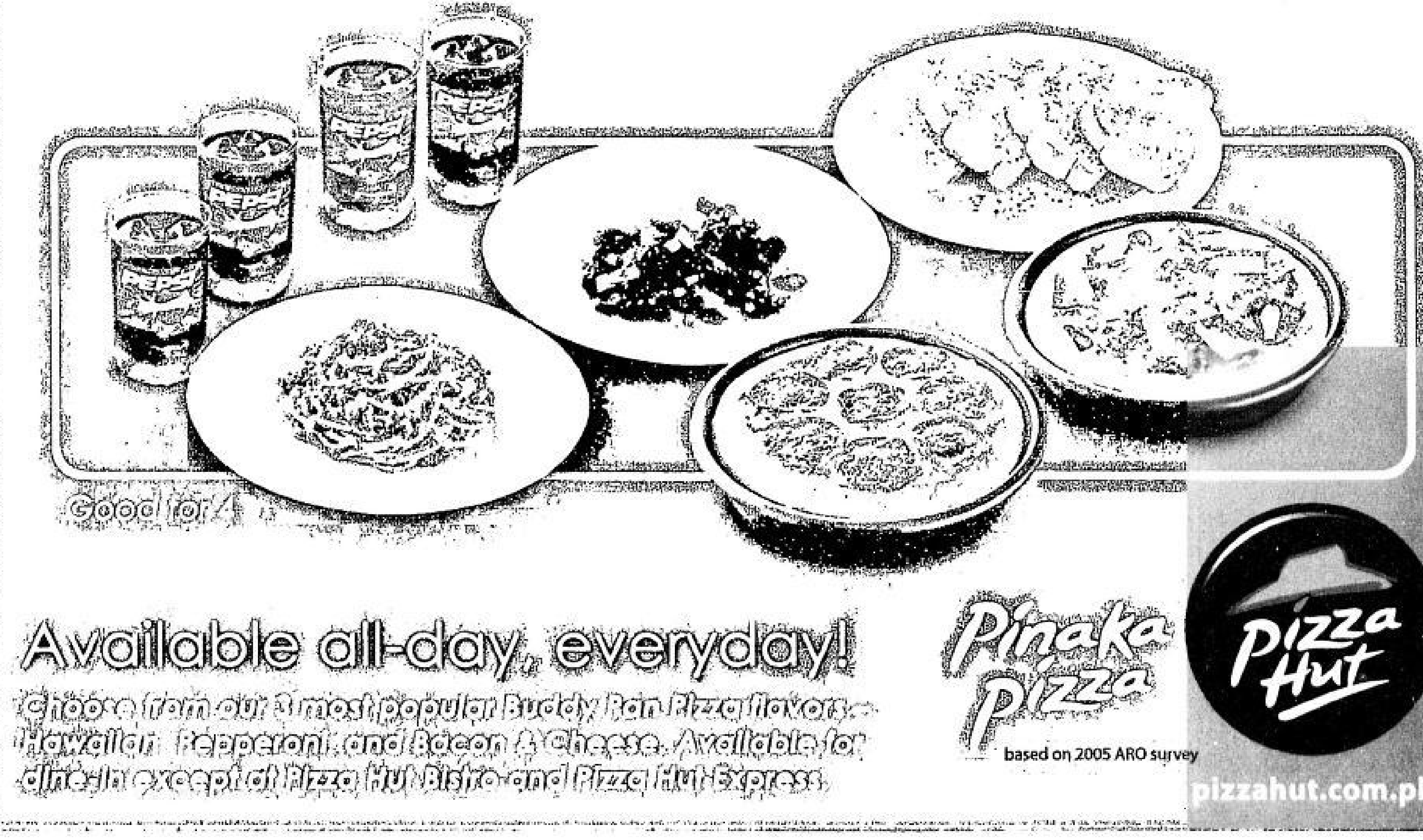


Good for 2



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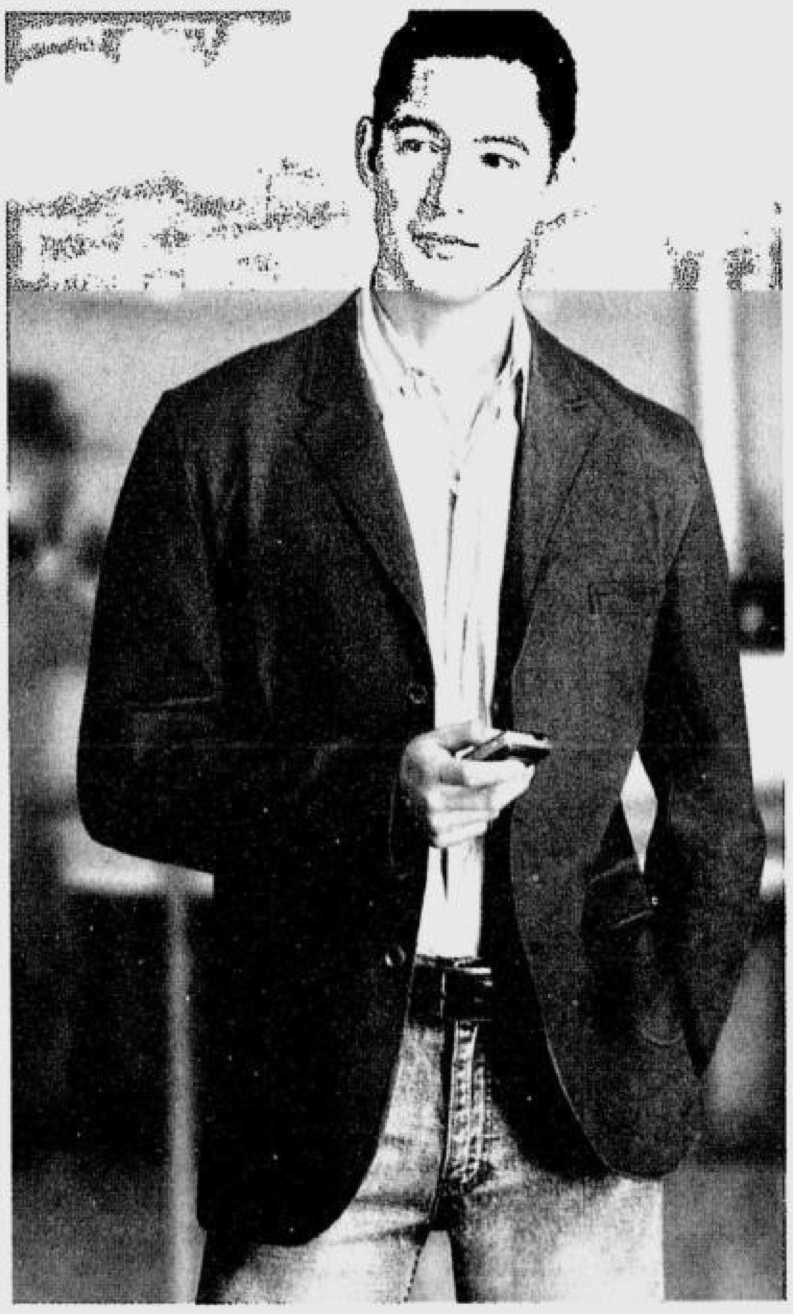

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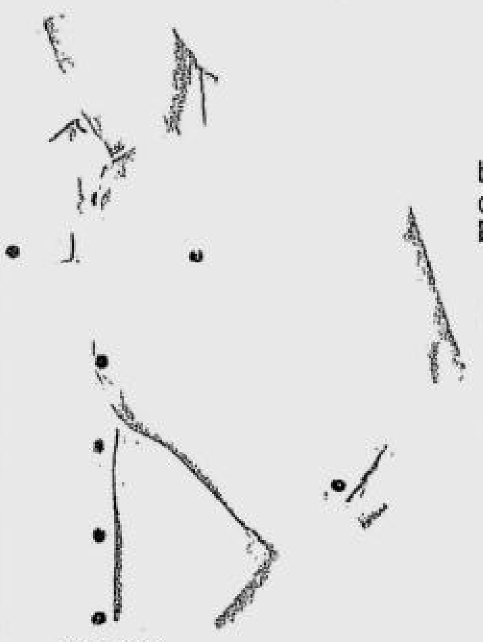

fashion shades **P199.75**

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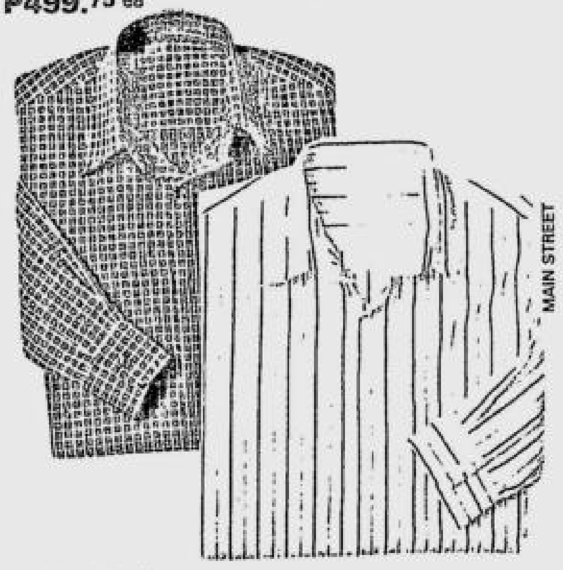

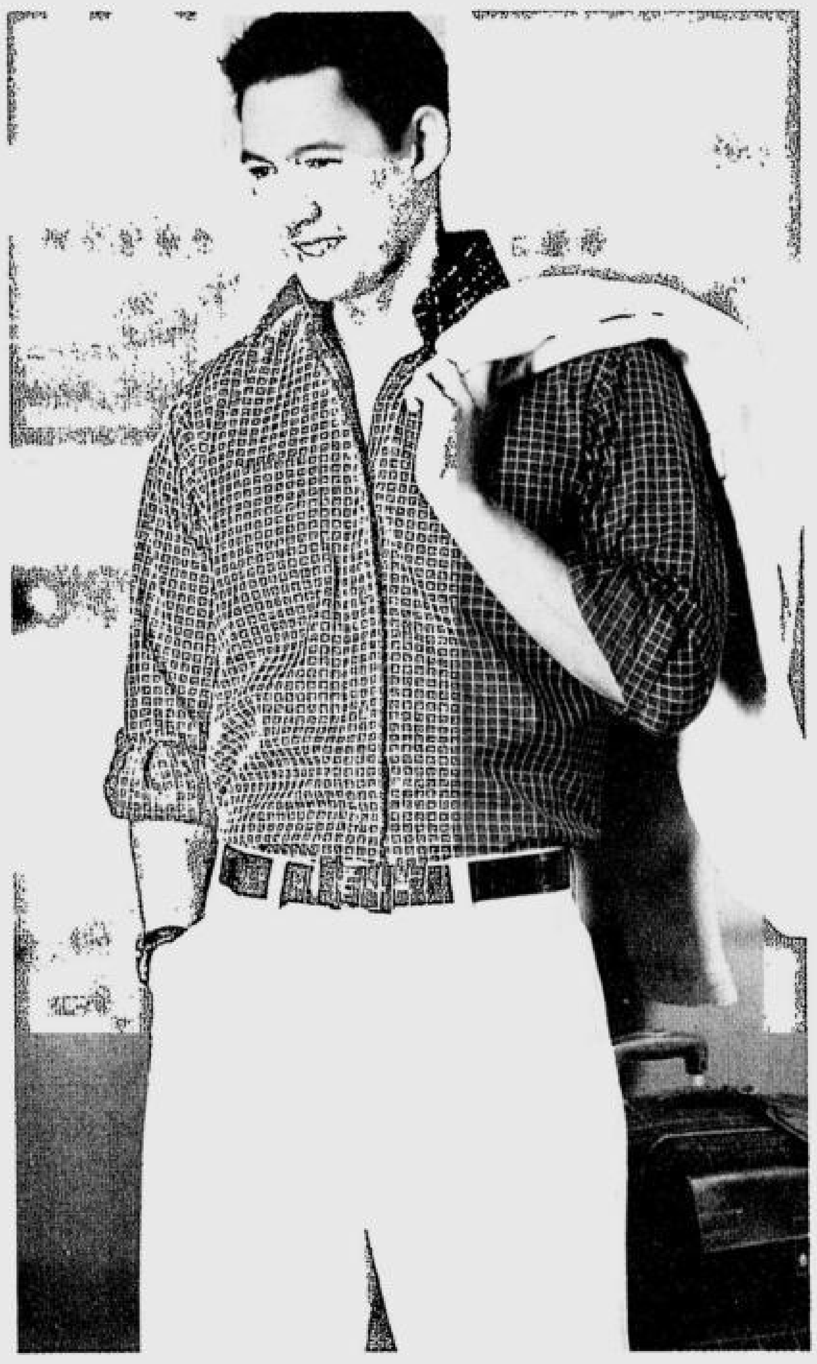

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succeed at work

Putting together a versatile work wardrobe does not mean leaving your personal style behind. The choice of colors and the fit of your fashion picks speak volumes about your ability to successfully pursue your career path with the help of power dressing.

Featured in this spread are winning combinations of attractively-priced fashion pieces, including dress shirts, blazers, jackets, easy-wear slacks, good shoes and distinctive accessories that you can mix and match.

When shirt-shopping, the most important thing to know is not just your size but how the collar, cuffs and sleeves are styled.

To complete your look, you'll need a classic pair of shoes in quality leather (with laces instead of velcro) that will raise your stance to the level of corporate visibility.

In the end, personal style is really the best route to take. This means choosing only the style that's right for your look, without being afraid of your repertoire of wardrobe choices.

live the luxe

Whatever the business or social milieu, people tend to judge those they deal with on the basis of how they look. What really makes your *beyond nine-to-five look* a stand out is that clean, uncluttered approach. The rule holds true for shirts, slacks, shoes and accessories: *Simple is better.*

So go ahead and set your sights on the dynamic and the new at the Men's Department – where the colors and patterns of the selections reflect a trend that's fresh out of the fashion box.

enjoy life

It's a wrap for your hectic week. Get your mind away from work concerns as you treat yourself to a relaxing weekend.

With the leisure wardrobe you can create from SM Department Store's Collections, you ought to be really going your way– ready for anything that spells a casual, comfortable weekend.

Relax in style in SM Department Store's savvy finds that leave you looking like a million even on your most comfortable days.

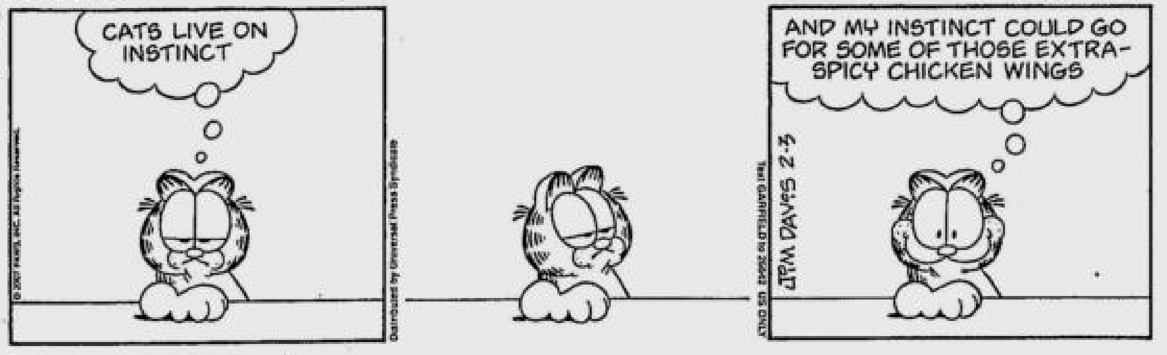
ComicRelief

e-mail feedback at arts@inquirer.com.ph

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2007

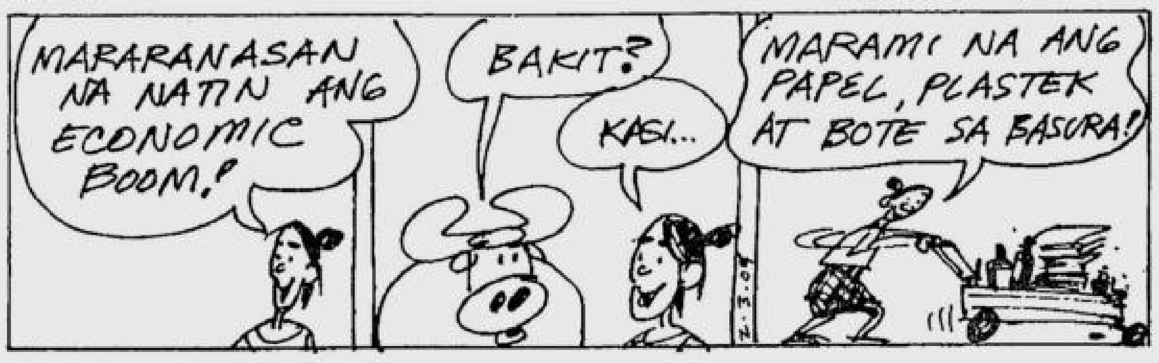
GARFIELD

BY JIM DAVIS


CATS LIVE ON INSTINCT
AND MY INSTINCT COULD GO FOR SOME OF THOSE EXTRA-SPICY CHICKEN WINGS
JIM DAVIS 2-3

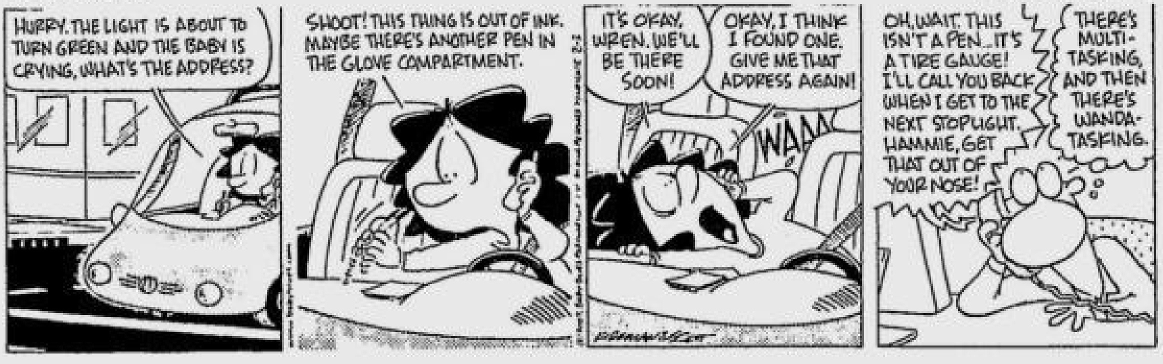
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


MARARANASAN NA NATIN ANG ECONOMIC BOOM!
BAKIT?
KASI...
MARAMI NA ANG PAPEL, PLASTEK AT BOTE SA BASURA!

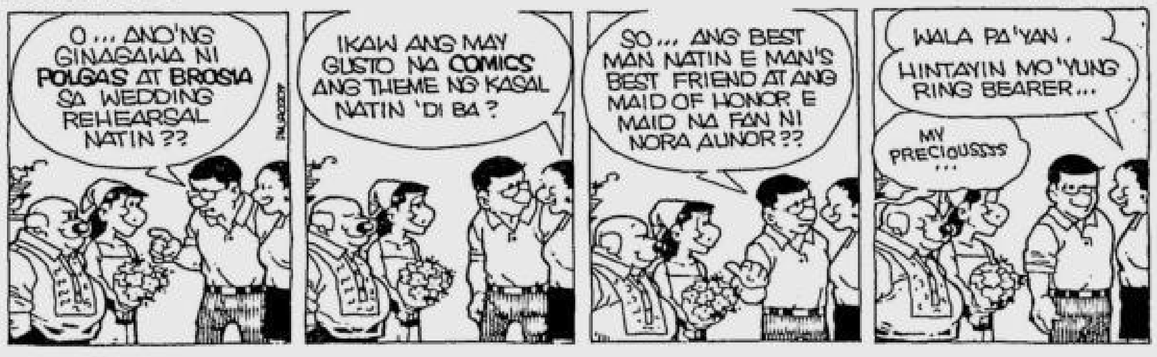
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


HURRY. THE LIGHT IS ABOUT TO TURN GREEN AND THE BABY IS CRYING. WHAT'S THE ADDRESS?
SHOOT! THIS THING IS OUT OF INK. MAYBE THERE'S ANOTHER PEN IN THE GLOVE COMPARTMENT.
IT'S OKAY, WREN. WE'LL BE THERE SOON!
OKAY, I THINK I FOUND ONE. GIVE ME THAT ADDRESS AGAIN!
WAAA
OH, WAIT. THIS ISN'T A PEN... IT'S A TIRE GAUGE! I'LL CALL YOU BACK WHEN I GET TO THE NEXT STOPLIGHT. HAMMIE, GET THAT OUT OF YOUR NOSE!
THERE'S MULTI-TASKING, AND THEN THERE'S WANDA-TASKING.

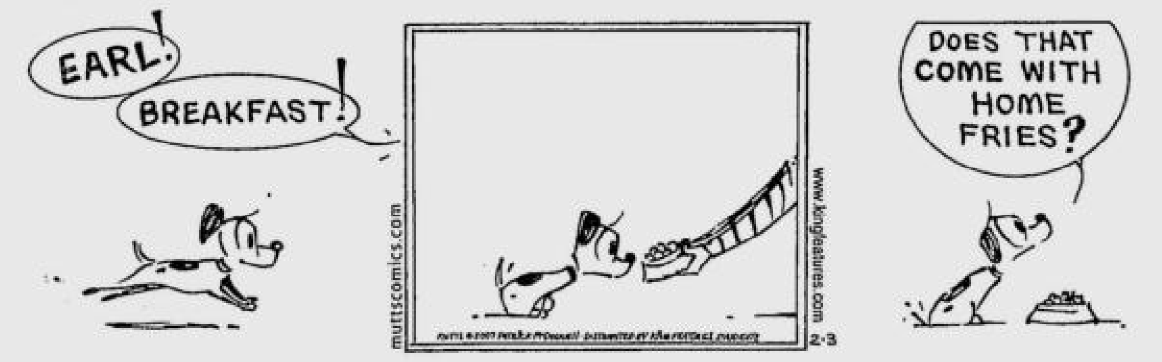
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


O... ANO'NG GINAGAWA NI POLGAS AT BROSIA SA WEDDING REHEARSAL NATIN ??
IKAW ANG MAY GUSTO NA COMICS ANG THEME NG KASAL NATIN 'DI BA ?
SO... ANG BEST MAN NATIN E MAN'S BEST FRIEND AT ANG MAID OF HONOR E MAID NA FAN NI NORA AUNOR ??
WALA PA'YAN. HINTAYIN MO 'YUNG RING BEARER...
MY PRECIOUSSSS ...

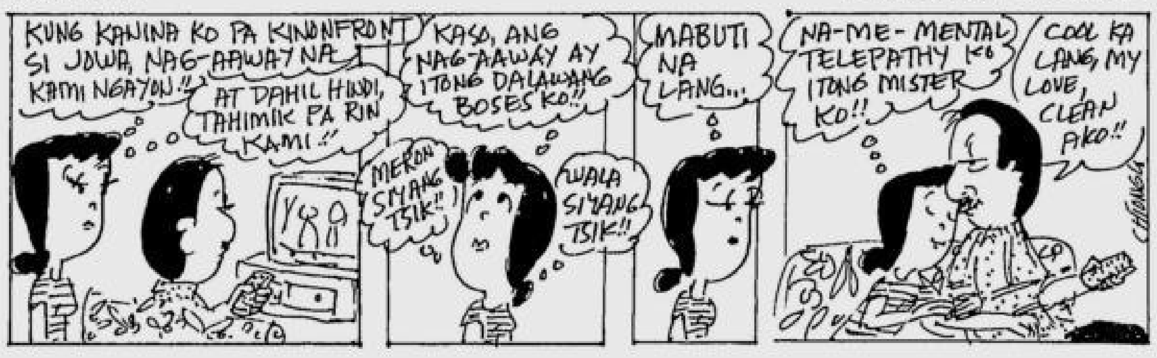
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


EARL!
BREAKFAST!
DOES THAT COME WITH HOME FRIES?
muttscomics.com
www.kingfeatures.com
2-3

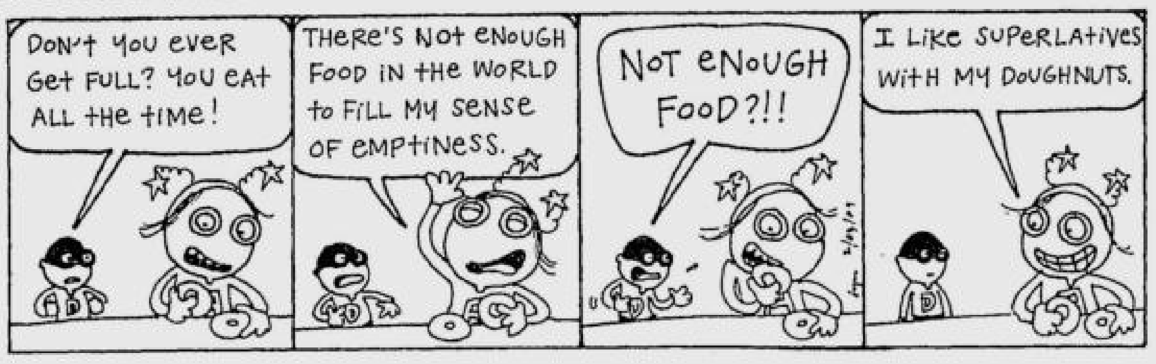
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


KUNG KANINA KO PA KINONFRONT SI JOWA, NAG-AAWAY NA KAMI NGAYON!!
AT DAHIL HINDI, TAHIMIK PA RIN KAMI!!
KASO, ANG NAG-AAWAY AY ITONG DALAWANG BOSES KO!!
MERON SIYANG TSIK!!
WALA SIYANG TSIK!!
MABUTI NA LANG...
NA-ME-MENTAL TELEPATHY KO ITONG MISTER KO!!
COOL KA LANG, MY LOVE, CLEAN AKO!!
CHIONGLO

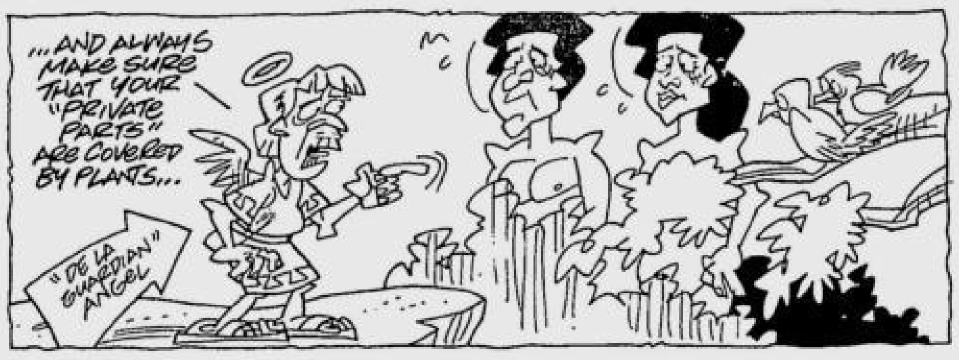
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


DON'T YOU EVER GET FULL? YOU EAT ALL THE TIME!
THERE'S NOT ENOUGH FOOD IN THE WORLD TO FILL MY SENSE OF EMPTINESS.
NOT ENOUGH FOOD?!!
I LIKE SUPERLATIVES WITH MY DOUGHNUTS.

DIVINE COMEDY

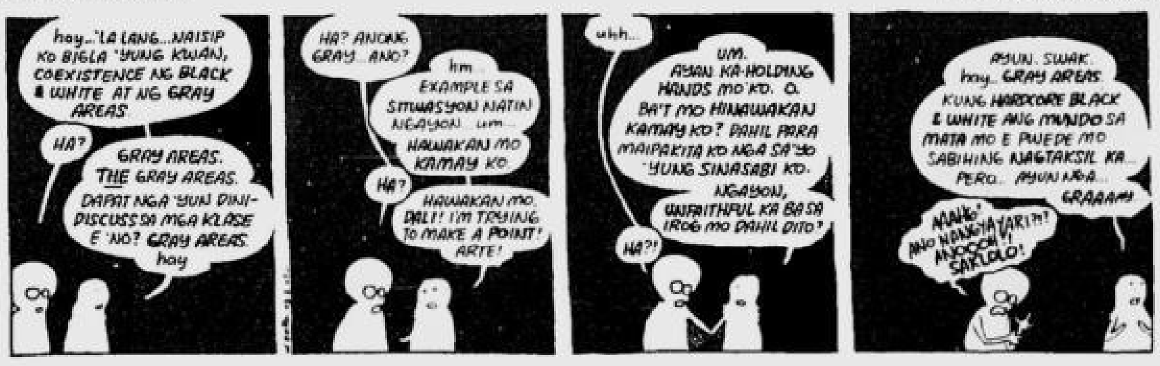
BY STEVEN PABALINAS


...AND ALWAYS MAKE SURE THAT YOUR "PRIVATE PARTS" ARE COVERED BY PLANTS...
"DE LA GUARDIAN" ANGEL

CENSORSHIP IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN

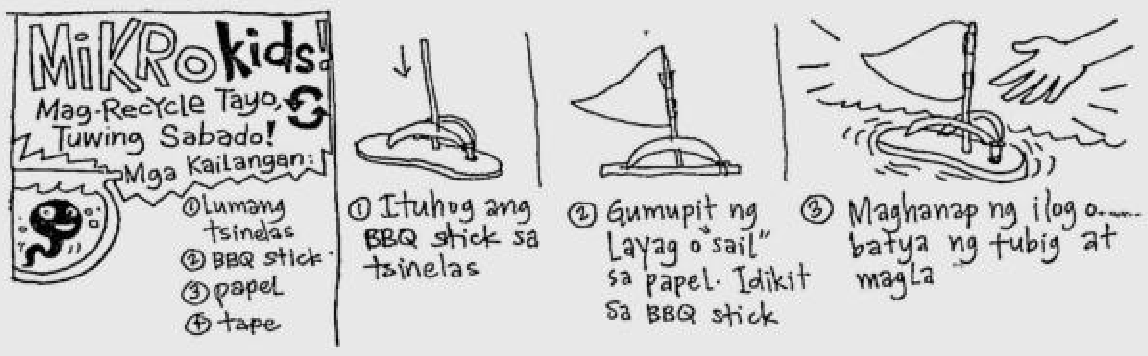
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


hoy...'LA LANG...NAISIP KO BIGLA 'YUNG KWAN, COEXISTENCE NG BLACK & WHITE AT NG GRAY AREAS.
HA?
GRAY AREAS. THE GRAY AREAS. DAPAT NGA 'YUN DINI-DISCUSS SA MGA KLASE E 'NO? GRAY AREAS. hay
HA? ANONG GRAY...ANO?
hm... EXAMPLE SA SITWASYON NATIN NGAYON... um... HAWAKAN MO KAMAY KO.
HA?
HAWAKAN MO. DALI! I'M TRYING TO MAKE A POINT! ARTE!
uhh...
UM. AYAN. KA-HOLDING HANDS MO KO. O. BA'T MO HINAWAKAN KAMAY KO? DAHIL PARA MAIPAKITA KO NGA SA'YO 'YUNG SINASABI KO. NGAYON, UNFAITHFUL KA BA SA IROG MO DAHIL DITO?
HA?!
AYUN. SWAK. hay... GRAY AREAS. KUNG HARDCORE BLACK & WHITE ANG MUNDO SA MATA MO E PWEDE MO SABIHING NAGTAKSIL KA... PERO... AYUN NGA... GRAAAH!
MAAAK! ANO NANGYAYARI?!?! ANOOOH! SAKLOLO!

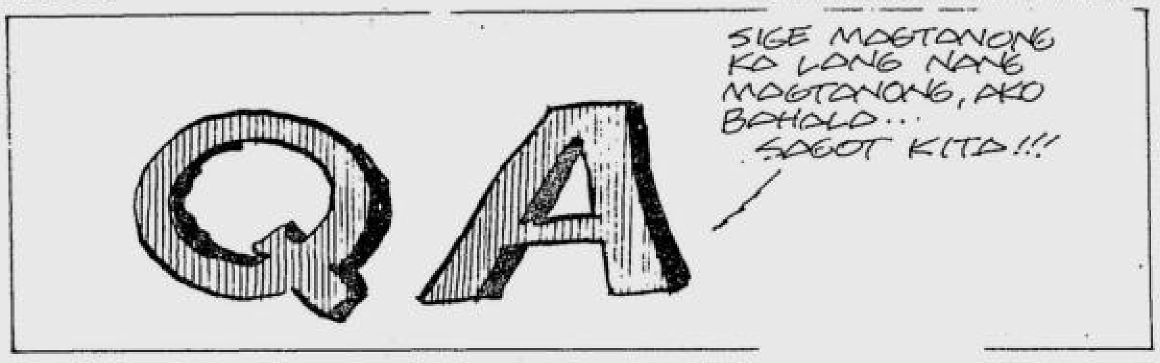
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


MiKRokids!
Mag-Recycle Tayo, Tuwing Sabado!
Mga Kailangan:
① Lumang tsinelas
② BBQ stick
③ papel
④ tape
① Ituhog ang BBQ stick sa tsinelas
② Gumupit ng Layag o "sail" sa papel. Idikit sa BBQ stick
③ Maghanap ng ilog o... batya ng tubig at magLa

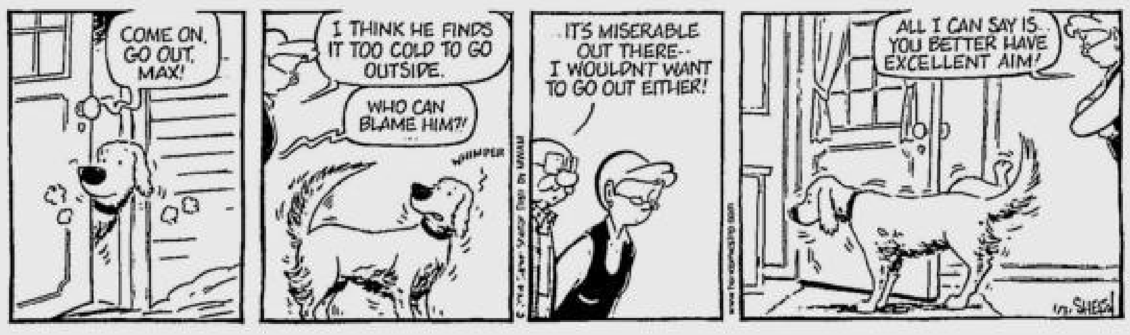
TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


SIGE MAGTANONG KA LANG NANG MAGTANONG, AKO BAHALA... SAGOT KITA!!!
Q
A

BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


COME ON. GO OUT, MAX!
I THINK HE FINDS IT TOO COLD TO GO OUTSIDE.
WHO CAN BLAME HIM?!
WHIMPER
IT'S MISERABLE OUT THERE-- I WOULDN'T WANT TO GO OUT EITHER!
ALL I CAN SAY IS... YOU BETTER HAVE EXCELLENT AIM!
SHELTON

DAILY CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4	5	■	6	7	8	■	9	10	11	12	13
14					■	15			■	16				
17					■	18			■	19				
20					21	■	22		23		■	24		
■	■	■	■	25		26					■	27		
28	29	30	31								■	32		
33											■	34		
35				■	■	■	■	■	■	■	36			
37			■	38	39	40	41	42	43	44				
45			■	46										
47			■	48							■	■	■	■
49			■	50				■	51		52	53	54	55
56			57		■	58		59	■	60				
61					■	62			■	63				
64					■	65			■	66				

By Ed Voile
Gillette, WY

2/3/07

ACROSS

1 Military student
6 100 square meters
9 Hutchinson and Hathaway
14 Fervor
15 Apiece
16 Actress Talia
17 Climbing vine
18 Period
19 Of an arm bone
20 Hits short of the green intentionally
22 "SportsCenter" stn.
24 Fruit drink
25 Error
27 Transgression
28 Fatal Greek gift
32 Frozen surface
33 Defaulter's opposite number
34 Anthropology subject
35 Revival shout
36 Lug along
37 Wernher __ Braun
38 Violates
45 Begley and Wynn
46 Affability
47 Jeans brand
48 More unsteady
49 Sharpton and Gore
50 Nudge
51 "O Pioneers!" writer
56 Trumpet blast
58 Mind reading
60 Not a soul
61 Madagascar primate
62 Carry with effort
63 Slobber
64 Utopias
65 Therapeutic resort
66 Wiggly

DOWN

1 Telephone
2 Opera song
3 6/6/44
4 Time periods
5 Shocks to the system
6 Imitator
7 Altar screen
8 School supply items
9 Into pieces
10 Org. of Flyers and Jets
11 "Do I Move You?" singer
12 Wipes out completely
13 Tranquility
21 Brooches
23 Mexican money
26 Ursula Andress film
28 Like a snow-plowed highway
29 Made over in a new style
30 Keyless-entry phrase?
31 Singer Bon Jovi
36 Bo Derek movie
38 Chronic complainers
39 "Typee" sequel
40 Buffalo coins
41 Begins again
42 Diamond stat
43 Guinness or Baldwin
44 Open porch
52 Actor Rip
53 Oater star Gibson
54 "Dukes of Hazzard" spinoff
55 Depend (on)
57 Shutout spoiler
59 Org. of Woods

Friday's Puzzle Solved

T	A	M	P	■	I	S	P	Y	■	A	R	C	E	D
A	R	I	A	■	D	O	R	A	■	N	E	H	R	U
I	L	L	S	E	E	Y	E	W	■	A	G	I	L	E
L	O	O	■	N	A	A	C	P	■	L	A	N	E	S
■	■	■	V	A	L	S	E	■	Z	O	L	A	■	■
I	D	I	O	M	S	■	P	R	I	G	■	B	A	A
R	A	N	T	O	■	S	T	U	N	■	S	E	N	D
I	N	T	E	R	N	S	■	S	C	A	L	E	N	E
S	T	E	S	■	I	T	C	H	■	V	O	C	A	L
H	E	R	■	A	L	S	O	■	D	A	P	H	N	E
■	■	C	O	L	E	■	R	H	I	N	E	■	■	■
P	R	E	L	L	■	F	R	O	S	T	■	A	M	I
A	U	D	I	E	■	R	A	B	B	I	T	F	I	R
S	L	A	N	G	■	A	L	B	A	■	S	A	R	I
T	E	R	S	E	■	U	S	S	R	■	O	R	E	S

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2/3/07

HOROSCOPE

YOU BORN TODAY: You're a perfectionist. Many of you have top technical talents. You overlook nothing. You have excellent timing and delivery. Nevertheless, you're realistic about your limitations. (You don't kid yourself.) You're quite casual about possessions and everyday items. Brace yourself, because the year ahead might be one of the best years of your life! Open any door.

Birthdate of: Blythe Danner, actress; Stephen Euin Cobb, novelist/podcaster; Nathan Lane, actor.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Talk to bosses and parents about your great new ideas. Your recommendations might involve new technology. (Others will be impressed by what you have to say.)

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Sudden opportunities to travel or increase your education could occur today. If so, act quickly, because this window of opportunity will be brief.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Quite likely, somebody is prepared to do a favor for you or even give you gifts or assistance (financial or otherwise). Accept what is offered. And do it without hesitation!

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Difficulties with someone might take on a new dimension today. This person feels crowded and wants more space. You'll just have to understand this.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): You feel very independent at work today, but don't quit your day job. What you really need is a change of scenery and more appreciation for your great ideas.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): You feel playful and inventive today! Surprise flirtations might please and thrill you. Enjoy activities with children. See a movie or catch a game.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): The introduction of high-tech equipment into your home will please you today. However, be careful of power outages or domestic explosions among family members. Easy does it.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): You're very persuasive today. You can see many ways to present your argument so that others will agree with you. Conversations—with siblings, in particular—will be lively!

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Sudden opportunities to earn money in a new way (could involve computers or technology) plus sudden chances to spend it will come along today. Either way, act quickly. You snooze, you lose.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): You're highly energized today. You feel restless and impatient because you have a strong drive for new experiences. You want something to happen! (It will.)

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Unseen forces seem to be pushing you in all directions today. You know you want to do something, but you're not sure what. Relax. Many people feel this way today.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): A friend or even a casual acquaintance will surprise you today. You might also get an invitation to join a group that is a bit different from you. (It's exciting.) If you explore this, you'll learn something new.

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku

by Dave Green

5					1	3		7
	3				6		8	
8					7			
7	1	3						
			6		5			
						9	3	8
			4					9
	7		1				6	
4		1	8					5

Difficulty Level ★★★★

2/03

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HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

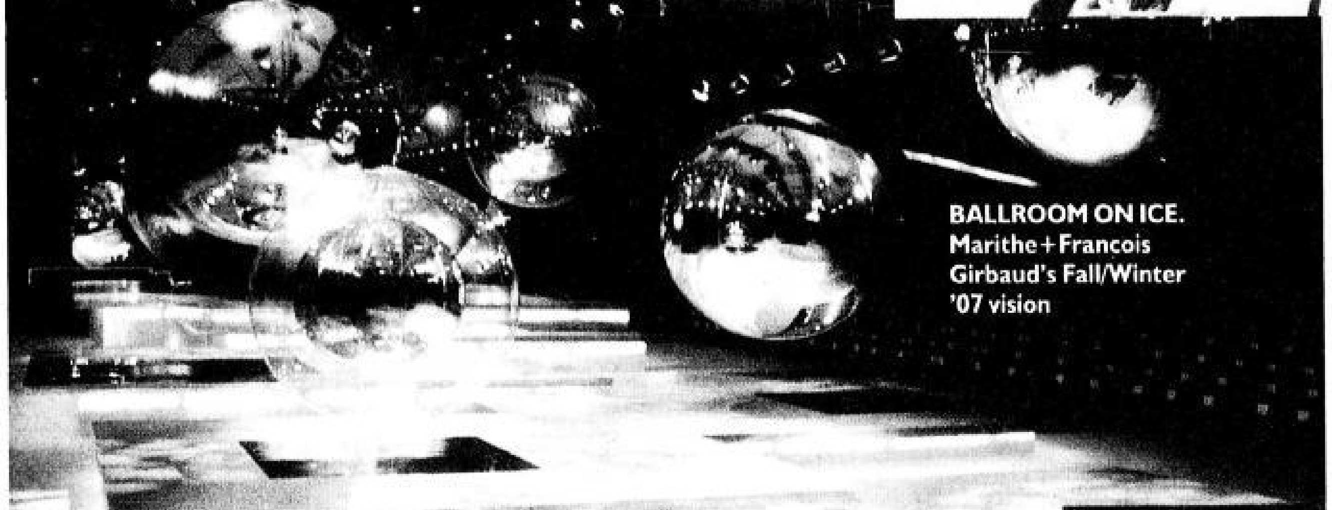
Answer to previous puzzle

7	4	9	3	1	6	8	2	5
6	8	2	5	4	9	1	7	3
1	5	3	7	2	8	4	9	6
9	2	4	6	7	3	5	8	1
5	3	1	2	8	4	9	6	7
8	7	6	1	9	5	3	4	2
2	1	8	4	5	7	6	3	9
3	9	7	8	6	1	2	5	4
4	6	5	9	3	2	7	1	8

Difficulty Level ★★★★

TOMORROW'S VOYEUR. Dolce and Gabbana's Spring/Summer 2007 advertising campaign features metallica mania.

The WOW starts now



BALLROOM ON ICE. Marithe+Francois Girbaud's Fall/Winter '07 vision

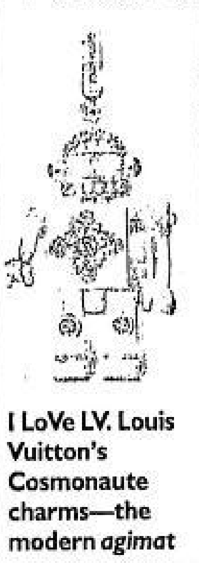
The future's so bright, everyone needs shades

By Tim Yap

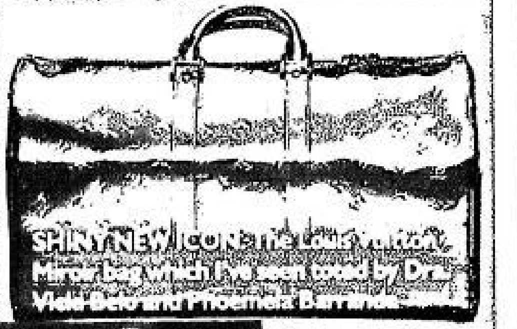
THE JETSONS WOULD HAVE loved to live in our era when lines between present (the past is dead, obsolete, bye bye!) and future have been blurred and made razor sharp and crystal clear—everything in high definition no less.

Microsoft showed me the "Home of the Future" and the "Office of the Future" in their Microsoft Campus in Redmond Seattle. Elsewhere in the world, things are also moving at bullet speed—the fashion, art, music, media are more connected as ever. Neo-futurist is the way to go as rocket science ragamuffins, foil fetishists and reflective robotics dominate the scene from the global catwalk to your very own PC.

Witness on this page the global convergence of the future, proving once again that you can't argue with a Bill Gates prediction.

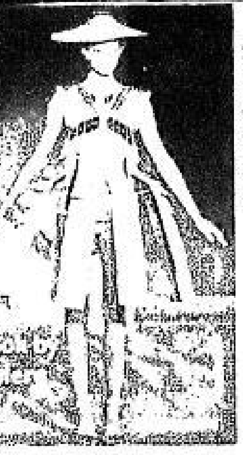


I LoVe LV. Louis Vuitton's Cosmonaute charms—the modern *agimat*

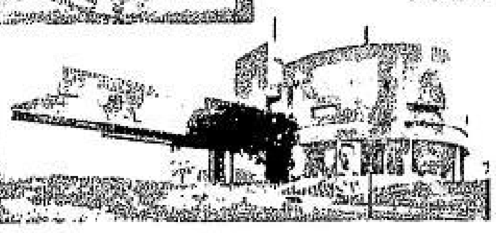


SHINY NEW ICON. The Louis Vuitton Mirror bag which I've seen toted by Drs. Vicki Belo and Phoemela Barranda

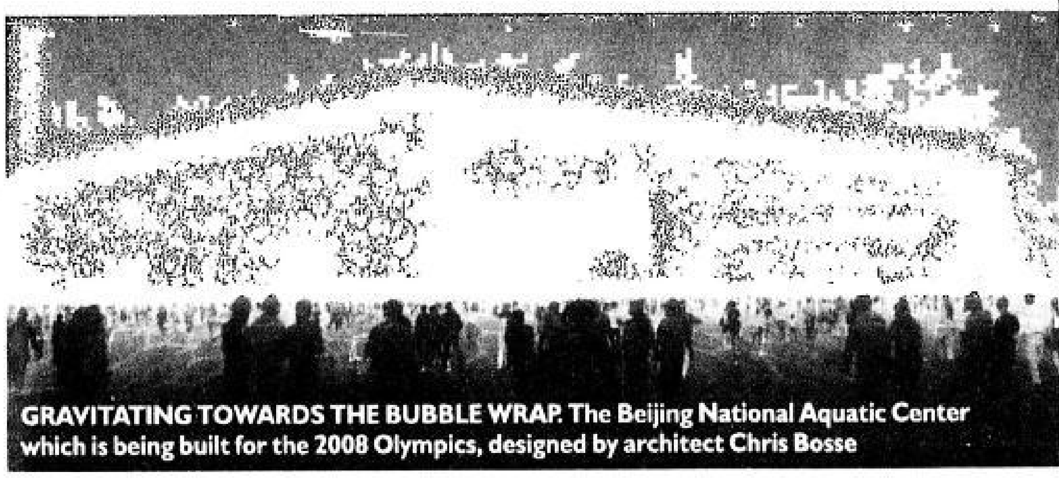
ROBOTIC T[illegible] This season's [illegible] by Nicolas Ghesquière for Balenciaga



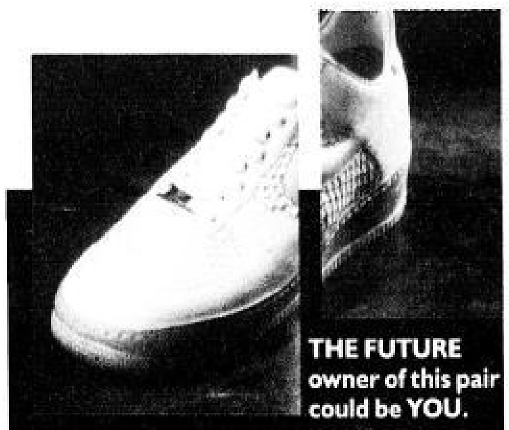
SPACEWEAR FETISH. Hussein Chalayan's Spring/Summer '07 runway homerun



THEATER OF THE FUTURE. The Guthrie Theaters in Mississippi by architect John Nouvel



GRAVITATING TOWARDS THE BUBBLE WRAP. The Beijing National Aquatic Center which is being built for the 2008 Olympics, designed by architect Chris Bosse



THE FUTURE owner of this pair could be YOU.

May the Force Be with You

THE TALE OF NIKE'S COLORFUL PAST and exciting future with athletes is the story of Air, told in the language of Force.

Since its debut, the Air Force 1 has been the footwear that epitomized what the sport of basketball means to those who love it. From the hardwood to the streets of New York, Philadelphia and the rest of the world, the concept of Air Force 1 was not only applied on-court, it was applied in life.

Air Force mania in Manila

Today, the Force experience will be defined for the chosen ones as Nike auctions off one Nike Air Force 1 Lux Anaconda and one Air Force 1 Lux Crocodile starting at P100,000 a pair at the Nike Air Force Space, located at the Manila DJ Club (MDC) in The Fort, Taguig. In the end, there will only be one Manileño in the entire Philippines who will walk with the Lux Anaconda and another who will slide their feet into the Lux Crocodile model. Winners also get the chance to fly to Singapore to personally pick up their prize, which includes a special tour of the Air Force Space in the country. Not only will the winner's collection be the envy of every sneakerhead alive, but he will be doing people good because the proceeds of the auction will go to Special Olympics Philippines.

Aside from the auction, the night will be capped by free flowing old school music catered by DJs Ace and Mars of Styles Entertainment.

25 years of basketball knowledge, 25 years of craftsmanship, 25 years of cultural heritage and that's only the beginning. The future of Air Force One holds a promise of another 25 years of legendary performance and iconic style—a future ensured by the visionaries at Nike who have dedicated themselves to both the preservation of the shoe's soul and the innovation of its spirit.

'Superizing' software—the gospel according to Bill Gates

From page C2

ports us to a bus stop where he picks up his phone and the screen comes alive, showing us an aerial view of where he's at, the exact street in 3D, with restaurant recommendations to boot! It's like having your own personal butler named Bill Gates.

"Hardware alone is not enough to deliver on the promise of digital decade. There are some key things missing, and in particular, the key thing missing is the connection," Gates added as he humanized hardware in his keynote address. "Delivering on connected experiences—where people are being productive, doing new creative things, where they're sharing with each other, where they're mobile, where they're just playing games—that is the key element that's missing. And something that we've all got to deliver on to take full advantage of that hardware, and deliver on the promise." In other words, Bill is promising to deliver us the "F" word—fun.

Ready, get set, game!

Gates and Microsoft Entertainment and Devices Division president **Robbie Bach** gave sneak previews of its impressive lineup of soon-to-be-released products and services which would rock the world of pop up culture.

Aside from the Windows Vista-loaded PCs, Windows Vista Ultimate (the flagship edition of Windows Vista) and other Vista features, Gates fans got their dose of Microsoft Zune, Windows mobile services and an improved Xbox 360 video game and entertainment system. You go, gamers.

The former Harvard dropout also mentioned a new partnership with Ford Motor Co. that will soon deliver digital experiences to the car. Sync, a fully integrated, voice activated, in-car communications and entertainment system for mobile phones and digital music players like Zune. Sync will give drivers the ability to control their digital music players using voice commands or controls on the steering wheel. Sync will also offer hands-free phone dialing, address-book synchronization, and other features such as the ability to read text messages through the car's audio system. Now that's pimping your ride. I knew it! **David Hasselhoff** and his Knight Rider are true visionaries!

The consumer oriented company, which invests 7 billion dollars a year in research (the biggest R&D budget for any company in the world) also introduced Microsoft Windows Home Server, which promises to be a vault and a bodyguard of sorts for all the digital content in the home.

Bill Gates takes the concept of a digital home and office 20 million levels up by transforming his turf's surroundings based on the interests and preferences of his visitors (if you happen to be invited to his and **Melinda**'s home). I found this interesting because it reflects Gates' way of dealing with his users—he makes it about them, allowing it to be molded to fit their needs and choices.

Back to the future

I had the chance to visit Microsoft's "Home of the Future" and "Office of the Future" in the Microsoft campus in Redmond, Seattle and it was mind blowing, to say the least. "My first visit there was a couple of years ago and now, I see most of the technology actually being used by consumers—it's become so 'now,'" said **Josine Bustalino**, emerging markets manager at Microsoft based in Seattle, who happens to be a true-blooded Pinay.

Microsoft has made a number of new bedmates-content partners who will make the Vista experience more complete for users—and its more than a fling thing. Foxsports.com partnered with Microsoft to develop Sportslounge (Go **Beckham!**) which combines live television, real-time scores, information and alerts to keep sports fanatics updated. Other new content partnerships in Media Center include Showtime, MTV, Nickelodeon and Starz.

The playahs (okay, gamers) have a reason to love Windows Vista too—Games for Windows is a growing market and Microsoft has to constantly keep up with the incredibly fast pace. "Windows Vista is going to expand that dramatically, by making it more powerful with DirectX 10. Key graphics technologies are also being built into the product so that the process of buying a game, putting it on your machine, and playing it is dead simple," Bach asserted.

Microsoft is a friend to parents too—Vista makes gaming safer with family settings and help make sure the content is appropriate for their children. That's the new parent empowerment.

Hipsters seal of approval

The super software also offers connectivity to the Live games and entertainment network. This provides connected experiences for gamers, linking their interests, desires and communities. Through the Live network, gamers on Windows Vista-loaded PCs can connect with their friends using Xbox 360 consoles.

The Xbox 360 got the hipster's seal of approval by making it an Internet-Protocol Television (IPTV)-enabled console by combining it with Microsoft TV IPTV Edition. (Don't be scared of these words—they won't eat you alive.) IPTV on Xbox 360 is expected to deliver world-class TV experiences such as digital video recording capabilities, with gaming, movie viewing, and even voice and video hookups.

Okay, now read this article all over again. Digest each detail and information because sooner or later, we will all be living it. And we'll ALL have connected experiences.

Wanna see your future? Go to the Psychic Festival!

WE CAN'T BLAME PEOPLE for being excited. The Chinese New Year brings with it renewed hope for finding love and fortune in the coming months.

If you can't wait to know what's going to happen to you in the year of the Boar, then head over to Eastwood City where the country's best psychics are gathered to help give you a sneak peek into your own tomorrow.

Starting on Feb. 17, Chinese New Year's Eve, until the 23rd, the Eastwood City Walk 2 becomes a haven for those who want to know more about their prospects and enjoy exciting activities at the same time.

For a small fee, people can consult 15 or more divination consultants. Feng shui consultant Dr. Andy Tan shares, "Each of our divination consultants is an expert on at least four divination tools. For example, a woman may want readings from the self-transforming tool of Saiwala, the very popular Tarot and the mystical Angel Cards. She also wants to have a palm reading … she can get all of those conveniently from one consultant. She doesn't really need to go from one table to the next."

GO TO EASTWOOD CITY. And I will tell you your future.

YOU boar!

Dr. Tan counts eight more divination tools to make a lucky dozen: "Numerology helps people determine the best time for major life decisions. An Aura reading helps diagnose physical malfunctions. Runes help discover mysteries and secrets.

"A Dream Interpretation helps people discover the hidden meanings of their dreams, while a Pendulum can help them make important decisions and maybe even help diagnose certain diseases. Graphology or the study of handwritings can help explain behavior and health issues, while Astrology can help people know what the heavens have written for them in the future."

The good medical doctor also shared, "As a Feng Shui expert, I will give mini seminars and of course be available for consultations so that people will find harmony at home and in the office … and bring prosperity to their lives."

As if the chance to explore the future isn't enough, Eastwood City's regular patrons will receive other big surprises. Every P500 purchase from any Eastwood City tenant entitles them to an "Ang Pao," which they can pin in our giant Prosperity Tree. They also have the chance to get a fortune piece from any of the 12 bowls, which represent the 12 Chinese birth signs, according to Tan.

The best celebrations are of course reserved for the Chinese New Year's Eve festivi ties. "The country's top bands gather at Eastwood City Central Plaza on Feb. 17 to welcome the New Year, and a fireworks display will light up the Eastwood City skyline at 10 p.m.," said Megaworld Corporation Commercial Division head Kevin Tan.

PSYCHIC HOTLINE. Tarot card readings, palmistry and aura healing are among Eastwood City's offerings this coming Chinese New Year.

Consult your favorite divination specialists in Eastwood City from 6-9 p.m. Call 6876770 to 74 or text (0917) 8EWCITY for more details.

Winning was easy.

Nenita Relles just won this Samsung 46″ Neo-series LCD TV and Home Theater System. All she had to do was use her HSBC credit card.

Watch out for more great offers where winning is just as easy. Just keep using your HSBC credit card.

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Photos may vary from actual unit. Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 4769,Series of 2006.

HSBC makes winning a daily habit

Anybody can say that they can watch TV everyday, but have you ever heard of winning a TV daily? HSBC cardholders were given that chance in HSBC's Daily LCD TV Raffle Promo which ran from October 19, 2006 to January 7, 2007. For 55 straight days, a brand new 26" Samsung LCD TV was given away. All they had to do to join was spend P100 using any HSBC credit card.

Lucky winners of the draws were:

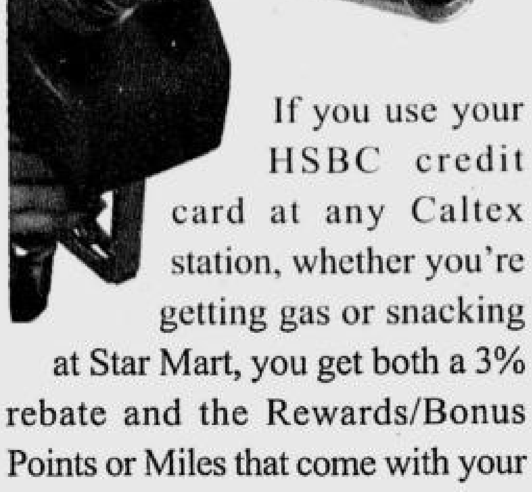
November 2006
Kenneth Hao of Davao City. Nini Aidasani of Quezon City. Bernadette Marasigan of Muntinlupa City. James Tan of San Juan. Roberto Valdes of Muntinlupa City. Judith Joy Naranjo of San Pedro, Laguna. Rosario Elisan of Quezon City. Melchor Sapaula of Marilao, Bulacan. Dante Francisco of Pasig City. Junneth Bordallo of Cebu City. Carolina Maglanoc of Paranaque City. Joycelyn Saylon of Dasmarinas, Cavite. Angelica Wong of Quezon City. Arlene Borja of Toledo City, Cebu. Conrado Pascual of Cainta, Rizal. Paul Robert Murga of Quezon City.

December 2006
Ana Linda Abaigar of Taguig. Jocelyn Sy of Manila. Celestina Arig of Antipolo, Rizal. Salvador Allana II of Caloocan City. Angeles Arabejo of Cainta, Rizal. Serafin Uy Jr. of Cebu City. Patricia Andrada of Makati City. Nerissa Tuano of San Simon, Pampanga. Virginia Rabasto of Pasay City. Marivy Guico of San Fernando, Pampanga. Lourdes Edradan of Quezon City. Wilfred Chua of Quezon City. Herman Abigan of Manila. Jocelyn Gajudo of Quezon City. Joselito Miranda of San Juan. Ma. Rosell Santillan of Pasig City. Norin Gener of Quezon City. Cleofe Tago of Cebu City. Carmen McTavish of Angeles, Pampanga. Mark Pacatang of Agusan del Sur. Anania Pelongco of Iloilo City. Arthur Tariga of Paranaque. Meriam Seriban of Dasmariñas, Cavite. Jose Mario Bunag of Pasig City. Stephen Berondo of Bacolod City. Marcelino Ednilao of Cebu City. Elizabeth Lee of San Juan. Marie Grace Daquipel of Davao City. Elizabeth Lising of San Juan. Kristoffer Amora of Mandaue. City, Cebu. Teresa Chua of Cebu City.

January 2007
Nick Jaranilla of Iloilo City. Galido Consul Jr. of Pasay City. Mark Lloyd Abbu of Quezon City. Roxanne Jale Espinosa of Davao City. Heraldina Salonga of Makati City. Emmylou Diez of Quezon City. Jennifer Jaromahum of Quezon City. Eric Brian Ouano of Mandaue City, Cebu.

Aside from the 55 TVs won in the daily draws, cardholders also looked forward to the grand draw prize, which was won by Nenita Relles of Bacolod City. She took home a 46" Samsung LCD TV that came with a home theater system. All in all, 56 lucky cardholders walked away with something new to watch.

More to watch out for with your HSBC credit cards



If you use your HSBC credit card at any Caltex station, whether you're getting gas or snacking at Star Mart, you get both a 3% rebate and the Rewards/Bonus Points or Miles that come with your card*. Other cards can only give you one or the other, so why not get both with your HSBC credit card?

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SATURDAY Special

Editor **Nestor U. Torre** • Assistant Editor **Rito P. Asilo**

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MIRREN. Accolades for her twin regal portrayals of the current (left) and former British monarchs, respectively.

Helen Mirren's two Elizabeths compared

By Nestor U. Torre

QUITE WITHOUT PLANNING TO, HELEN Mirren has let loose with a unique thespic one-two punch: She played Queen Elizabeth I on TV, and "The Queen," her portrayal of Elizabeth II is about to hit local movie screens.

Raves and awards

Mirren's twin "Elizabethan" portrayals have been richly rewarded with raves and awards, so it behooves acting buffs to try to catch both of them, the better to compare Mirren's takes on the two monarchs separated by centuries, but linked by their having the same name and lofty title.

We viewed Mirren's TV miniseries last year, and have just previewed "The Queen," so we can do exactly that.

Mirren's Elizabeth I was spoiled, manipulative, whimsical, flirtatious, vengeful, vulnerable and cruel—sometimes, all at the same time.

Since the actress had more time to get her thespic points and insights across, her portrayal was richer, more prismatic and occasionally even mystifyingly contradictory.

This resulted in a thespic treasure trove for viewers who wanted to appreciate the controversial monarch in the light of all of

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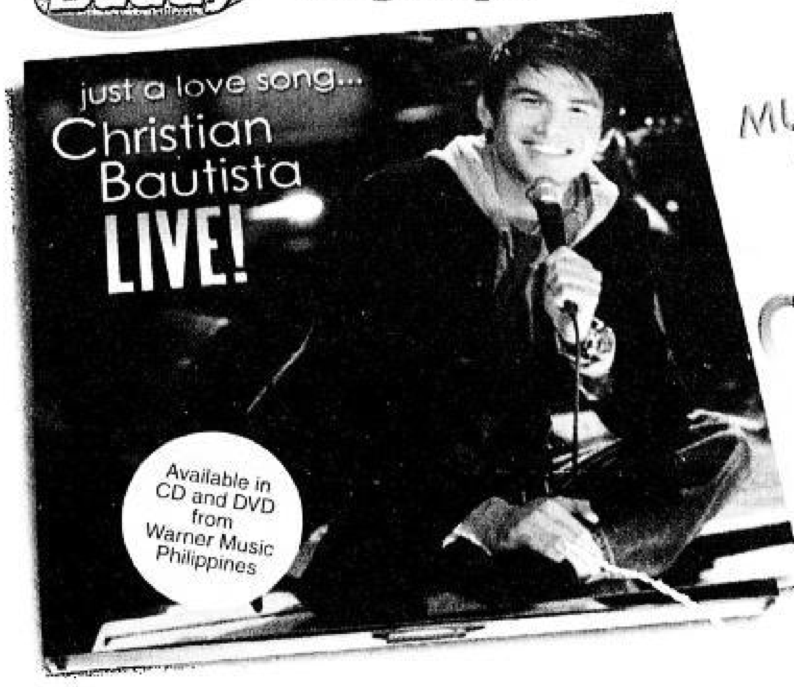

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NOW SHOWING

Changing of the comic guard in wacky romp

By Rito P. Asilo

"Night at the Museum"

D: Shawn Levy
S: Ben Stiller, Robin Williams, Owen Wilson, Ricky Gervais, Mickey Rooney

IN SHAWN LEVY'S FEEL-GOOD comic romp, Ben Stiller plays Larry Daley, the down on his luck, divorced father of 10-year-old Nick (Jack Cherry).

In a last-ditch effort to win his son's respect, the hapless protagonist grudgingly takes a job at the Museum of Natural History in New York to replace its three retiring night watchmen (Dick Van Dyke, Mickey Rooney, Bill Cobbs).

When the sun goes down, however, the magic of an ancient Egyptian tablet brings the place to life!

In no time, Larry finds himself being chased by the skeletal remains of a T-rex (who, it turns out, just *loves* to play fetch), coaching a love-struck US President Teddy Roosevelt (Robin Williams), mediating the territorial clash between Roman general Octavius (Steve Coogan) and American cowboy Jedediah (Owen Wilson), playing shrink to the consistently agitated Atilla the Hun (Patrick Gallagher)—and coping with a huge responsibility that's suddenly been thrust on his shoulder.

STILLER. The slacker father grows up.

AQUINO AND GARCIA. Topbill award-winning Cinemalaya entry.

It's foolhardy to take Levy's sci-fi blockbuster seriously because, despite its cinematic ingenuity, it operates on an implausibly silly premise. Despite the silliness, the production succeeds in delivering a full package of riotous but wholesome, family fun that banks on the wisecracking charm of Stiller playing ringmaster to different generations of celluloid jesters, whose individual styles demonstrate the changing of the comic guard through the years.

In this museum, humor comes from every nook and cranny: From the endearingly gruff Rooney and Van Dyke's tongue-in-cheek wit to the self-deprecating antics of Wilson and the potent sarcasm of the caustic Ricky Gervais, who plays the pretentious but hilariously inarticulate museum director, Dr. McPhee.

With a flurry of CGI-assisted visual thrills and a straightforward narrative devoid of artistic pretension, the movie doesn't solely rely on humor to win over its viewers.

It also teaches lessons on family values and wears its inspiring maxim on its cinematic sleeve: Some people are born great, others have greatness thrust upon them.

All his luckless life, Larry has always wanted to find his rightful place in the sun. Who knew he'd find his after sundown?!

"ICU Bed #7"

D: Rica Arevalo
S: Eddie Garcia, Angel Aquino, Irma Adlawan

Catch Rica Arevalo's Cinemalaya dramedy at Robinsons Galleria's IndieSine until Feb. 6 (Call 632-9116). Based on the debuting director's Palanca-winning script and graded B by the CEB, Arevalo's digital feature (this time, with better lighting and image projection) is about two sisters, played by Angel Aquino and Irma Adlawan, who must make a Solomonic decision when their tough-talking, stubborn father (Eddie Garcia in a career-best performance) is diagnosed with a terminal illness.

Gossip overwhelms local media

By Behn Cervantes

WE FILIPINOS ARE A DELIGHTful people: We smile no matter what. So, foreigners are captivated by our charm. To them, we appear to be a guileless breed—until they start reading our newspapers. They wonder why we involve ourselves in so much inanity.

One foreigner has observed that our newspapers are generally "empty." They offer snippets of foreign news, and have fine columnists, but many of our newspapers are laden with colored photos chronicling social events.

Gospel truth

Writers who report the goings-on of the rich and socially idle are well patronized. Their statements on fashion, trends and society's Who's Who are accepted as gospel truth. There are writers who write their columns like entries in a high school slum book.

When you switch on the TV set, you are deafened by news stories that are reported as though they were emergencies. You wonder why these shows bother with a microphone if the announcer is going to shout, anyway! Gone are the days when mellow-voiced announcers would deliver news updates in a sober manner.

A visiting friend of mine asked me why our TV stations allot so much time to gossip. I was hard-pressed for an answer.

Indeed, it has become standard practice to air hourly updates about the latest entertainment scandals. Starlets even believe that gossip and scandal boost their stock.

Of course, the stations' ever-ready reporters are only too glad to disseminate them. In fact, on Sundays, practically the whole afternoon is dedicated to Tinseltown's latest scandals. Whatever happened to "Keep holy the Sabbath Day"?

Excesses

There ought to be law against their excesses! I mean, how do gossip shows contribute to the welfare of our people? The prominence we give them demeans us! Those scandalous starlets and loquacious has-beens are terrible role models for the young.

The importance given to gossip is underscored by the fact that even evening news programs give almost equal time to gossip and legit news. But, are public service programs given ample time and attention?

Purveyors of gossip have succeeded in making the word *chismis* a cute term when, in fact, this terrible habit perpetuates the malpractice of spreading unsubstantiated and harmful information about an unaware third party.

What are the young to think when their role models are being gossiped about morning, noon and night? Why emulate Rizal, Bonifacio or Ninoy when all you need is notoriety?

This, at least, is the message we get from all this gossip on national television. That's disturbing, don't you think?

Fr. Peyton's legacy lives on

By Pocholo Concepcion

PEYTON. "A walking miracle."

THE BROADCAST MEDIA AS A means to propagate the power of prayer became a life-long mission for a man who had a wonderful story to tell.

"A walking miracle" was how Fr. James Reuter, SJ, described his friend, Fr. Patrick Peyton, who, in 1939, was a 30-year-old aspiring priest in America diagnosed with advanced tuberculosis, and was advised by doctors to turn to prayer—because surgery may not ensure his survival.

Peyton prayed long and hard, seeking intercession through the rosary, which he had learned as a kid being raised by a poor but loving family in Ireland.

A year later, tests revealed he was completely cured without medical intervention. When he received his priestly vows, Peyton promised the Blessed Virgin Mary he would devote his life propagating the virtues of the rosary as a family prayer.

Apostolate

It's now 2007, and Fr. Peyton's legacy—14 years after he passed on at age 83—is alive in 17 countries, especially the Philippines where his apostolate, the Family Rosary Crusade (FRC), carries on the mission of promoting the spiritual nourishment of the family through television.

FRC's long-running TV programs are aired Sundays on ABS-CBN's Studio 23, Mondays to Fridays on ABC-5 and Dream Satellite, and Mondays to Sundays on the Cebu Catholic Television Network.

Recently, the Cause of Beatification of Fr. Peyton successfully passed its initial stage in Manila with the closing of the Rogatory Trial—an investigative process that examines the holy deeds of a candidate for sainthood.

Imelda Cojuangco is among those who swear by Fr. Peyton's awe-inspiring character. Already a devotee of the Blessed Mother as a young child, Cojuangco further deepened her involvement in Marian affairs due to Fr. Peyton's influence.

Cojuangco attributes significant changes in her life to Fr. Peyton. "I used to pray the rosary on my own," she confesses. "But, I have discovered that gathering the entire household together is really the best way to pray—especially in moments of crisis."

In recent years, Cojuangco had been bothered by health problems, which have become bearable in the light of a daily practice—praying a novena for Fr. Peyton's intercession, led by her son, Tony Boy. "Everyday, my son comes over to pray with me," she relates. "And each time I go to the hospital for a checkup, doctors say that my heart is healing. I think Fr. Peyton is helping me get healed."

The late Philippine Ambassador to Russia, Alejandro Melchor and his wife, Rosario, had likewise been touched by Fr. Peyton's charisma.

The latter recalls meeting the priest sometime in the '70s. "My husband convinced Fr. Peyton to use videotapes instead of the bulky equipment that he was then using to show the films about Mysteries of the Rosary in the provinces," she recalls. "Fr. Peyton was instrumental in bringing a son of mine back to the Catholic faith."

Magnetic

Guillermo "Willy" Soliven was a career officer at the Central Bank when he met Fr. Peyton in 1962. "My wife and I were quickly drawn to him," Soliven tells us. "He had a magnetic personality, but he was very down to earth. He was quite famous for having Hollywood stars like Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra and Grace Kelly endorse his mission. But, in person, he was very humble. He inspired us do our jobs better. Not long after meeting him, I started praying the rosary regularly."

On the day his elder brother, veteran newsman Max Soliven, died of a heart attack in Japan, Willy was attending the Rogatory Trial Closing and Thanksgiving Mass for Fr. Peyton's Cause of Beatification at the Manila Cathedral. "I told Cardinal Rosales that *Manong* Max must be in heaven interviewing Fr. Peyton," he says in jest.

(The Family Rosary Crusade is inviting everyone to join the Fr. Peyton Guild as a means of strengthening prayer life in the family, and to obtain graces through Fr. Peyton's intercession. Call Pie Mabanta at 521-6953, or e-mail peyton@frc.org)

Helen Mirren's two . . .

From page D1

her virtues, vices and vagaries.

On point of contrast, "The Queen's" limited screen time compels Mirren to more rigorously focus her portrayal of Elizabeth II, zeroing in on the reigning monarch's private and public reactions to the sudden death of her former daughter-in-law, Princess Diana.

At first, Elizabeth was positively frigid in her view of the woman who had well nigh upstaged her popularity on the global scene.

But, as the public expressed its grief over the death of the well-loved princess, the British royal family reeled from intense criticism, and the monarch was forcibly made to defrost her arch view of the situation.

Unusual transformation

A key agent in this unusual transformation was England's then new Prime Minister, Tony Blair. Initially, the queen hardly deigned to talk to the "young upstart."

But, when he correctly read the public's foul mood and helped avert catastrophe for the royal family, Elizabeth was (still archly but) properly grateful.

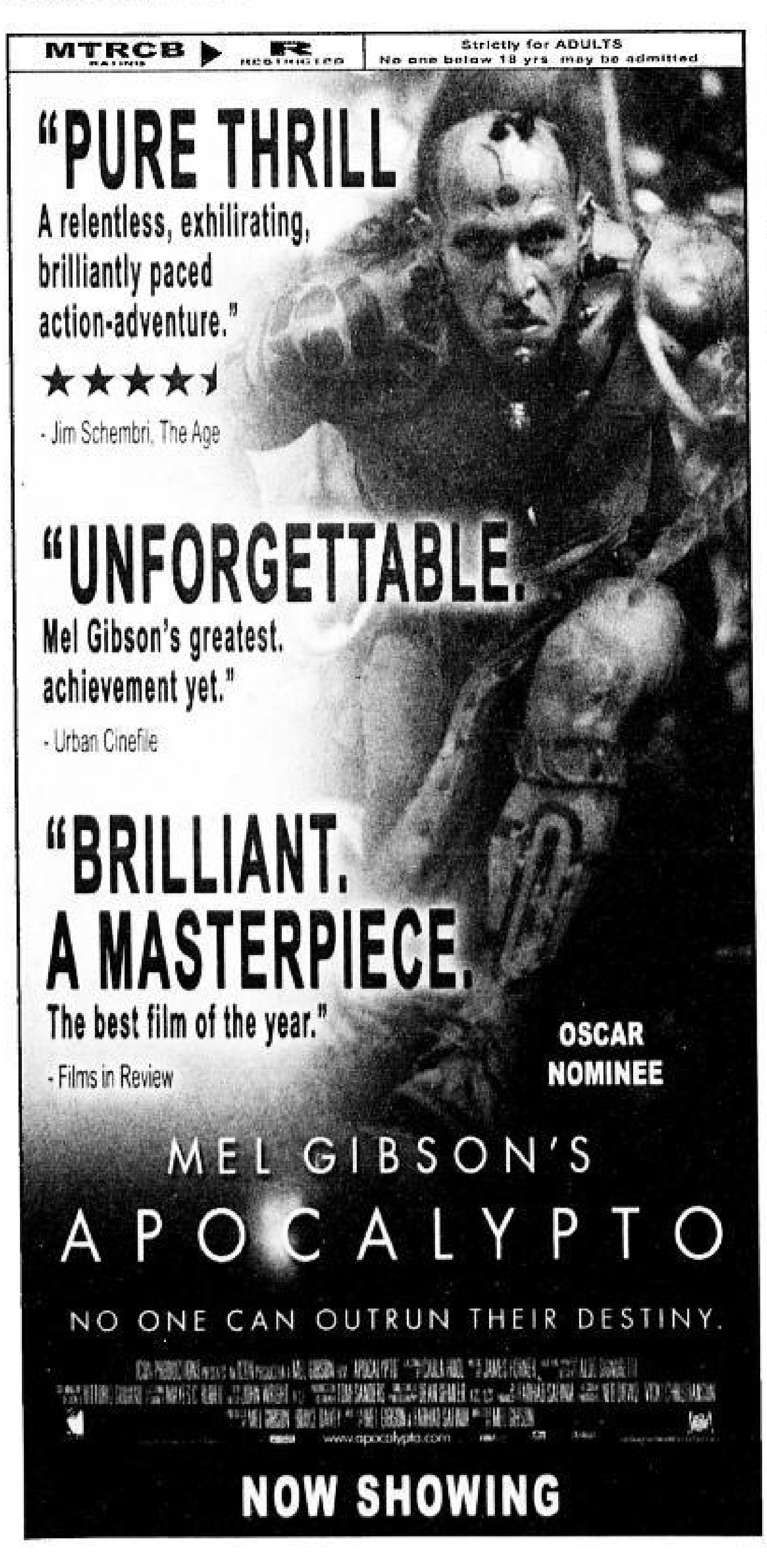
"The Queen" is an instructive viewing experience because it shows how removed from reality members of royalty can become—ultimately, to their peril.

As for Mirren's portrayal of Elizabeth II, it is psychologically astute and rewarding because it shows both her curt and vulnerable sides. She isn't used to being criticized, so when her people turn against her and accuse her of insensitivity to the public's grief over Diana's violent death, the monarch seeks refuge behind her frosty exterior.

Vulnerability

But, Mirren is brilliantly sensitive enough to enable us to perceive Elizabeth's vulnerability through her icy facade—truly a tough act to follow for any actress. No wonder some people are betting that Oscar gold is in store for Mirren this year, on top of the many acting honors she has already reaped.

What about Mirren's thespic "equipment" enables her to insightfully portray the two Elizabeths as clearly distinct characters? Her understanding of human nature is exceedingly deep, and is matched by her similarly wide range of performing skills. Utilized in tandem, these twin abilities are well nigh unrivaled in their telling effect on TV and in the movies.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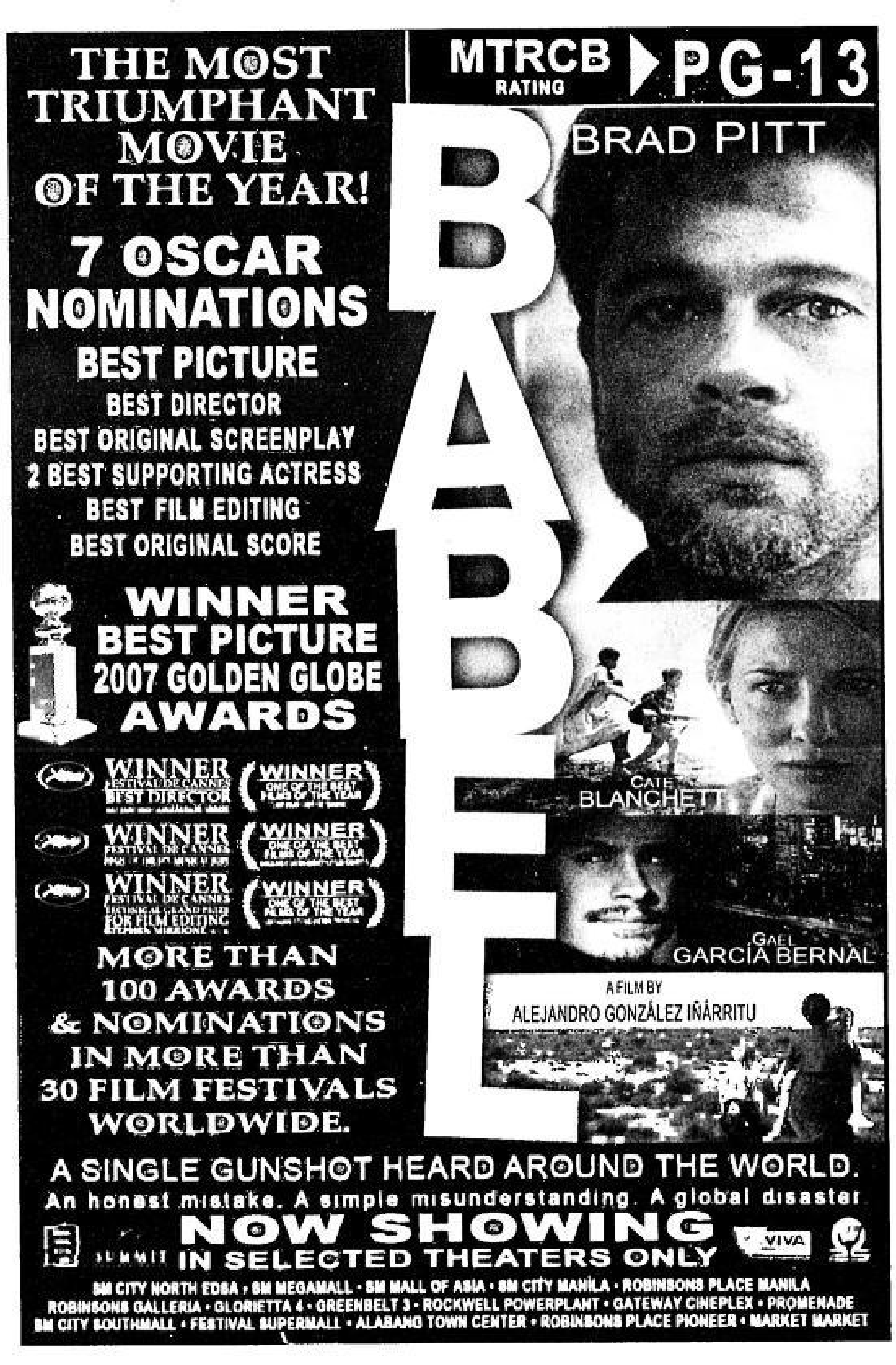
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But beyond this heritage of providing world-class services, Fuller Life Direct Selling carries with it the heritage of passionately bringing to each home some of the most exclusive brands people have grown to trust and love through the years.

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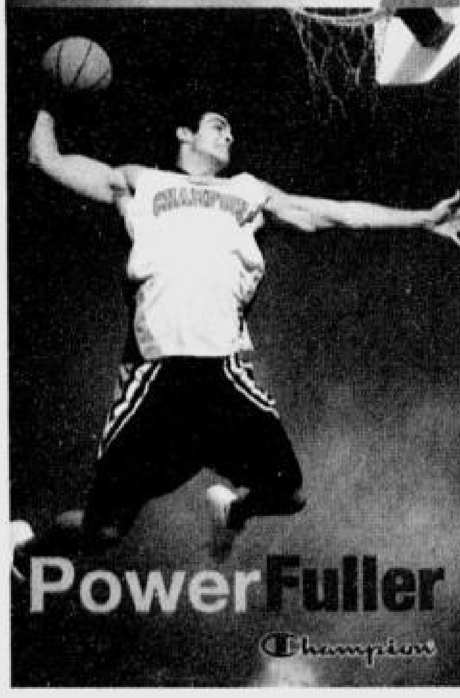

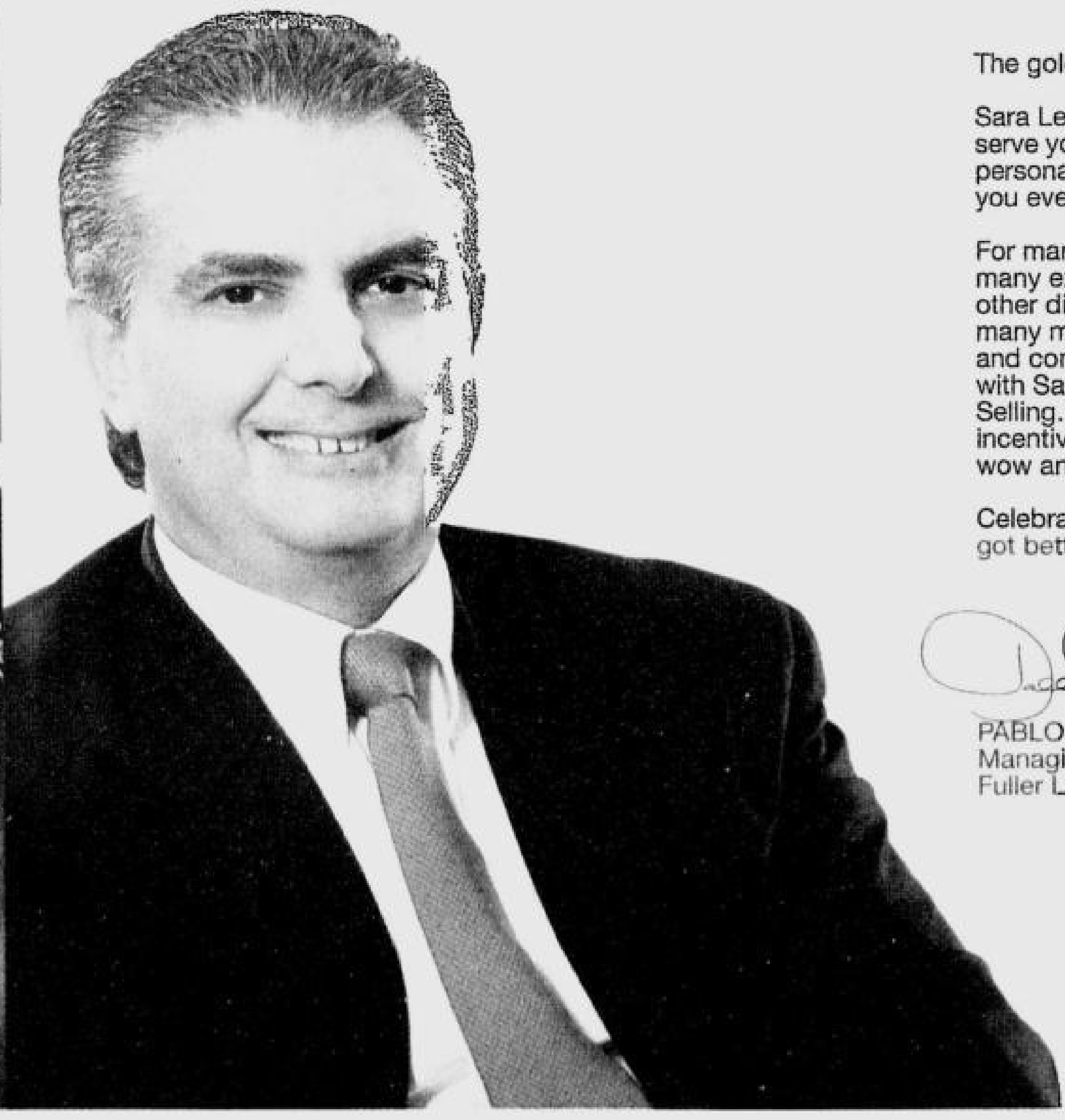

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They've come a long way from their simple lifestyles. Today, these Sara Lee Direct Selling dealers are living fuller lives with the many triumphs that they have accomplished through ingenuity, dedication, and hard work.

Roselie Nonescan with family

Years ago, Roselie Nonescan could only dream of having a home where her family could spend a lot of quality time with each other. At that time, she and her husband Ariel were living in a house owned by Ariel's parents while engaged in a string of small businesses.

Roselie and Ariel wanted a big family and a large home for their kids. Hence, she decided to concentrate on her dealership with Sara Lee Direct Selling.

"I chose Sara Lee Direct Selling because the products are very good and consumable, allowing for repeat orders that will provide me with regular income," says Roselie, Sara Lee Direct Selling's second top performing Independent Business Manager (IBM) for 2006. "I knew that because of its earning capacity, I will be able to fulfill my wishes for my family."

Working for Sara Lee has given Roselie more time for her growing family. "Now we have a beautiful home and we even get to travel every year—go sightseeing, do a lot of shopping and eat native dishes from each country we visit!" she gushes. "We've become closer to each other," she adds.

Indeed, the Nonescans now live a vastly different life. If business was good for the last couple of years, it's even better now with Fuller Life Direct Selling.

Lydia Manio

Lydia Manio is a persevering woman who yearned to have an empowering career. Now, Lydia is reaping the rewards of her hard work. She has claimed her rightful spot in Sara Lee's roster of top Independent Business Managers (IBMs) for 2006. Her earnings have also helped her enjoy properties, cars, and travel opportunities.

Lydia recalls, "I decided to sign up because Sara Lee Direct Selling has a wide range of excellent products."

Aside from financial rewards, her career brought out her innate leadership and mentoring abilities, which she uses to motivate and inspire her dealers to achieve success.

"I used to dream of being financially secure and successful," Lydia shares. Now, Lydia's good life can only be better.

Emmy Samson took a leap of faith in February 1993 when he dropped his dealership with other more established direct selling companies to join Sara Lee Direct Selling—then an upstart in the industry.

"I realized that promoting the products would be easy because they are all quality products, branded and sellable," he says.

Emmy has never regretted his decision. Because of Sara Lee Direct Selling, he was also able to build a comfortable home and travel abroad every year. Now, not only is he the company's top Independent Business Manager (IBM) for 2006, but he has also given in to his passion: cars.

In today's busy, fast-paced world, transportation is no longer a luxury, but a necessity. For Emmy, it is both a source of comfort, luxury and pride. Through Sara Lee Direct Selling's Vehicle Incentive Program (VIP), Emmy and his family now own four vehicles—the latest car models in the market. "Whether it's for a short ride or a long trip, transportation is no longer a problem in our family," says Emmy. "There is an available car in the garage anytime."

"It has always been my goal to provide my family with some of life's luxuries," he admits, "because I believe that a measure of material comfort is important for our welfare. I also believe in nurturing our passions. With the transition to Fuller Life Direct Selling, there will be even more incentives and income opportunities that are more generous. I can expect my passion for cars to be in high gear."

Emmy Samson

Kay Sanvicente with family

"Whenever I travel, I still pinch myself to make sure I'm awake," quips Kay Sanvicente of the Cabanatuan branch. "Until now, I still can't believe the things that are happening in my life."

Before she joined Sara Lee Direct Selling, Kay's finances were enough to help her pay the bills and have a simple yet comfortable life with her family. Little did she know that she would be on her way to achieving financial freedom—allowing her to travel as much as she wants with her husband and kids—through Sara Lee. She has already gone to the US, Europe, and Australia, all through Sara Lee Direct Selling's travel incentives.

Kay knows that she owes much of her success to the products themselves. She reveals, "Their products are consumables so buyers will keep on ordering these items."

Today, Kay is a second-time beneficiary of the company's Vehicle Incentive Program (VIP). She owns four distribution centers in Nueva Ecija through which she earned her first P4 million in sales in 2006. Truly, she is now living a life of stability and excitement.

Miriam Hansen

"Before I used to sell *uling* and *longanisa* on the streets. I was barely making enough to provide food for my family," shares Miriam Hansen. "My luck changed when I met a recruiter from Sara Lee Direct Selling."

Now, she belongs to Sara Lee's roster of millionaires. Since she joined Sara Lee Direct Selling, her business has thrived far more than what she could possibly dream of. "Even my children help out in my business! They do the accounting and logistic work. Sara Lee has made our relationship closer."

As a way of sharing her blessings, Miriam has become very vigilant in recruiting other people, knowing that working with Sara Lee Direct Selling will let them enjoy a fuller life like hers.

Marife Orosco and Jeanne delos Santos both had heartfelt dreams.

"Before I joined Sara Lee Direct Selling, I always wished I could upgrade my way of living and have more quality time with my husband and family," Marife explains. Since Marife and her husband had different sources of income, it was difficult for them to spend as much time as they want together.

"Joining Sara Lee Direct Selling has given me the opportunity to spend more time with my husband since we get to travel and share life's pleasures together." As for their standard of living, they now have high-end appliances at home and an expensive car. Sara Lee Direct Selling has upgraded Marife's life to one of comfort, freedom and contentment.

On the other hand, Jeanne delos Santos, then a typical working girl, longed for a more financially rewarding career.

Jeanne saw the promise of a lucrative business since Sara Lee Direct Selling's products offered a highly attractive opportunity. With her never-say-die attitude in facing the challenges of a direct selling career, she gradually climbed the ladder of success as Sara Lee-Edsa's top producer.

"I've always believed determination would get me somewhere," says Jeanne. "But I never realized it would make me go places—literally!"

Jeanne has emerged as one of the company's top performing Independent Business Managers (IBMs)—an achievement that has provided her with so many perks that she and her sons truly enjoy. "We've frolicked in the most charming beaches and toured the most scenic regions!" She is also able to send her kids to excellent schools.

Indeed, Marife and Jeanne's most fervent wishes have come true, thanks to Sara Lee Direct Selling. They exclaim, "Now that we have Fuller Life Direct Selling, we are so excited because we know that our lives could only get better!"

Marife Orosco with husband

Jeanne delos Santos with sons

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The best that nature has to offer—all for your skin.

Nurimetics is a premium cosmetics line that is naturally enriched to help benefit your skin. It uses the extraordinary balance of nature and science needed to create high-performance naturally enriched products that nurture, beautify, and protect the skin and give it a healthy, radiant glow.

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Hanes is one of the largest apparel brands in the world offering underwear, shirts, and baby clothing.

For different occasions, there's a Hanes Classics undershirt to suit your mood. Whether you need a shirt for lounging about your home or an undershirt to wear under your formal clothes, Hanes brings you the perfect comfort, style, support, and durability you need.

Made of lightweight fabric to keep you cool and fresh, Hanes Classics undershirts and briefs give you the ultimate in comfort.

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When it comes to sportswear, Champion answers the needs of active, health-minded people with innovative, high-quality athletic-related products.

Champion builds on its heritage as a mover in athletic sportswear by bringing a new level of fit and comfort to coordinating T-shirts and shorts, with practical, real improvements.

From basic shirts to performance tees, shorts to accessories, Champion guarantees quality and style that's perfect for winners.

Eager for more? Fuller Life Direct Selling invites you to join its growing family.

Be a Fuller Life Direct Selling Independent Business Manager (IBM), and you can use Fuller Life's top-selling products as earning opportunities while availing of fantastic incentives.

Each year, top-selling IBMs are treated to all-expense paid trips. This year, the Top 8 IBMs even get the chance to travel to Guadalajara, Mexico, in a grand package that includes airfare, accommodation, pocket money, and a city tour.

Another great incentive is the Loyalty Advantage Bonus, a rewards program that gives Fuller Life registered dealers a chance to accumulate points through regular purchases and exchange these for corresponding prizes. Aside from accumulating points, members will also enjoy special promos and gifts exclusive to members.

Aside from these, Fuller Life Direct Selling adds even a bigger treat for their dealers. The VIP Car Program entitles IBMs who meet their targets to the latest car models completely paid for by Fuller Life. With cars worth P500,000 to P1.5M, trips to different parts of the world, and lots of other exciting prizes, Fuller Life Direct Selling surely makes way for a better life.

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Horror flick with an edge

TOLENTINO. Dance video.

"THE MESSENGERS." A Hollywood debut for the Pang brothers.

CAN CHILDREN SEE WHAT ADULTS CAN'T? in the exciting new thriller, "The Messengers," the Solomon family has left its fast-paced life in Chicago for the secluded world of a farm in North Dakota.

Once there, however, teenage Jess and her three-year-old brother, Ben, begin seeing ominous apparitions invisible to everyone else. When those specters become violent, Jess' sanity is questioned.

Identical-twin directors, Danny and Oxide Pang, have turned the ghost genre inside-out with "The Messengers"—their first American feature and English-language debut.

The Pang brothers' movies have a special edge and impact because they themselves have had some brushes with the paranormal. Thus, their way of scaring viewers is less theatrical and more believable than others.

Oxide shares: "To us, what is scary is when you are alone and the room is completely quiet. Our style is always about the silence."

"The Messengers" stars Dylan McDermott, Penelope Ann Miller and Kristen Stewart.

At Powerbooks

Book lovers, rejoice! Ongoing until Feb. 17 is a big sale at the Powerbooks Outlet store at 25 Brixton st., Kapitolyo subd., Pasig City. Enjoy a 30 percent discount on all regular items, and up to 90 percent off bargain books. Call 490-1158.

MONTAGE

Today and tomorrow, Powerbooks Specialty Store and the Read or Die Organization will hold a literary convention at the Hotel Intercontinental in Makati. The convention brings together readers, writers, publishers, government and school organizations and book dealers to highlight the importance of reading and literacy.

Participants can watch movies, join contests, buy books, win freebies, participate in discussions, and vote for the *Pinoy* Reader's Choice Awards. Visit http://www.read-ordie.org.rodcon.

GMA-7 calendar

GMA-7's 2007 pocket calendar featuring the most popular Kapuso stars has been produced in cooperation with Fujifilm/YKL. and is available only at Fujifilm and YKL outlets nationwide. The calendar *cum* planner is graced by the stellar likes of Angel Locsin (January), Katrina Halili (February), and Jennylyn Mercado and Mark Herras.

Fujifilm/ YKL is the official distributor of Fujifilm Finepix digital cameras and photo printing services.

'Primeval'

The villain in the exotic thriller, "Primeval," is a bloodthirsty killer who has claimed over 300 victims. An American news team is determined to capture the serial murderer alive, but the trip proves to be fatal.

Aside from the central "monster" element, director Michael Katelman uses a bloody civil war as backdrop and alternate source of tension, as armed men come after members of the news team. "Primeval" stars Orlando Jones, Dominic Purcell and Jurgen Prochnow.

'Dance Latina'

With the new "Dance Latina: Shape Up with Rhumba, Samba and Cha Cha" video, learn classic moves under the expert guidance of DanceSport stars, Regine Tolentino and Edna Ledesma. Bonus features include tips on professional Latin dance and winning dance competitions.

'Ghost Rider'

In his latest starrer, "Ghost Rider," Nicolas Cage plays a superstar motorcylce rider who has made a pact with the devil to protect his loved ones. The devil has come to collect his due, so at night, Cage becomes the Ghost Rider, a bounty hunter of rogue demons. Eva Mendez co-stars.

UP Opera Season

Dean Ramon "Montet" Acoymo of the UP College of Music announces the 91st Anniversary Celebrations of the UP College of Music that include the second University Opera Season—Pergolesi's "La Serva Padrona" and Purcell's "Dido and Aeneas" at 7 p.m. on Feb. 9 at the Philamlife Theater. Call Yvette at 926-0026.

'Sayaw-Pinoy'

Tomorrow, Concert at the Park at Rizal Park presents "Sayaw-Pinoy," featuring Ballet Philippines, Ballet Manila, Powerdance, Philippine Ballet Theater and other groups.

Movies on TV

On HBO today at 2 p.m., "Faith of My Fathers." Tomorrow at 6 a.m., "The Life and Death of Peter Sellers." 10:15 a.m., "Shrek 2." 9 p.m., "Glory." Feb. 5 at 9 p.m., "In the Name of the Father." Feb. 6 at 1 :30 p.m., "Born on the Fourth of July." 9 p.m., "Reds." Feb. 7 at 11:30 a.m., "True Lies." Feb. 8 at 11:45 a.m., "Ray." 9 p.m., "Wag the Dog." Feb. 9 at 9 p.m., "The Right Stuff."

On Cinemax today at 11:40 a.m., "Mobsters." Tomorrow at 9 p.m., "The Net 2.0" (A beautiful computer expert finds herself entangled in a high-tech frame-up. This is the first American film to be shot entirely on location in Istanbul.) Feb. 5 at 6 a.m., "East of Eden." Feb. 6 at 6:30 a.m., "War and Peace." Feb. 7 at 6 a.m., "It's a Wonderful Life." 1:45 p.m., "Bonnie and Clyde." Feb. 8 at 9 a.m., "Harper." Feb. 9 at 3:45 p.m., "The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad."

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687-6963
GUARANTEED SEATS
MOVIES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

1	CHARLOTTE'S WEB	1:05, 3:35, 6:05, 8:55, 11:10	G
2	APOCALYPTO	2:20, 5:20, 8:20, 11:10	R-18
3	NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM	1:05, 3:35, 6:05, 8:35, 11:00	G
4	BLOOD & CHOCOLATE	1:40, 4:00, 6:20, 8:40, 11:00	PG-13

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CINEMA 1	BABEL	10:50 , 1:45 , 4:40 7:35 , 10:30	PG-13
CINEMA 2	BLOOD AND CHOCOLATE	11:50 , 2:10 , 4:25 6:40 , 9:00	PG-13

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CINEMA 3	APOCALYPTO	10:50 , 1:40 , 4:30 7:20 , 10:10	R-18
CINEMA 4	NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM	11:40 , 2:20 , 5:00 7:40 , 10:20	GP
CINEMA 5	CHARLOTTE'S WEB	10:45 , 1:10 , 3:30 5:50,8:10,10:30	GP

TICKET PRICES & SCREENING TIME SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE. FOR CINEMA INQUIRIES, CALL: 722 4496.

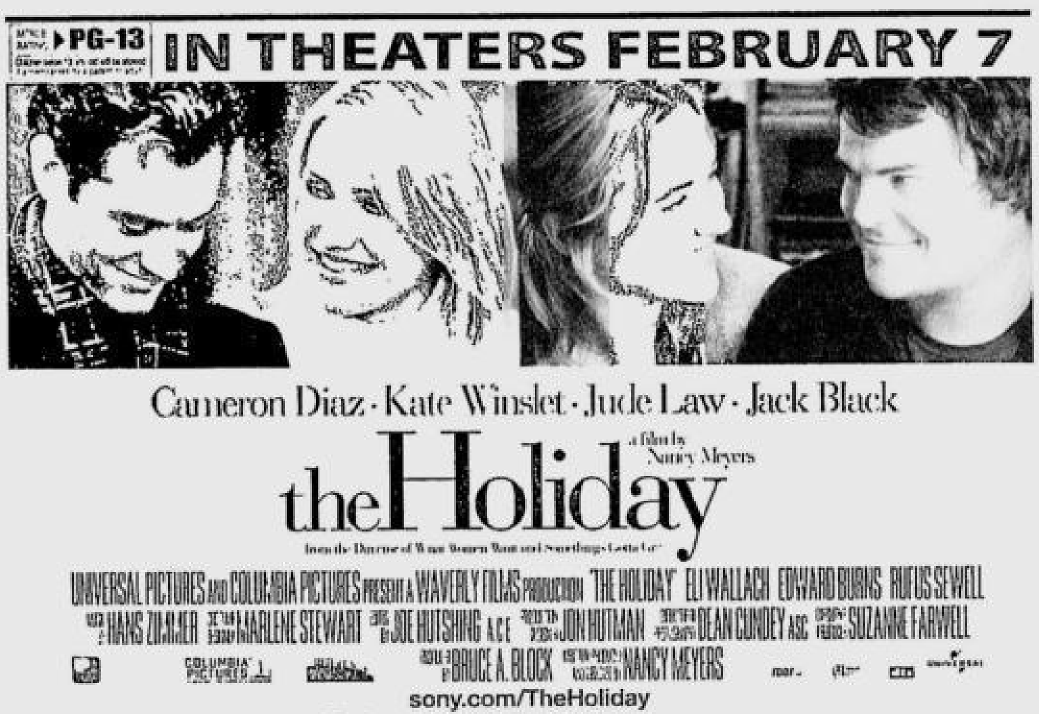
MUSIC MUSEUM

Feb. 02 & 03 , 2007	Piolo Pascual and Sam Milby	8:30 PM
Feb. 7 & 8 , 2007	Agot Isidro "Back to Basics"	8:30 PM
Feb 13 & 14 , 2007	Ogie Alcasid	8:00 PM
Feb. 16 & 17 , 2007	Passion Y Fuego	8:00 PM

TEATRINO
PROMENADE GREENHILLS

EVERY MONDAY	DANCE NIGHT	7:00 PM
Feb. 06 & 20 , 2007	DYORDS KO PO	8:30 PM
February 11 , 2007	LOVI POE "A BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION"	9:00 PM
Feb. 13 & 14 , 2007	RAYMUND LAUCHENGCO	8:30 PM

FOR INQUIRIES & RESERVATION, PLS. CALL : 721-6726 OR 721-0635



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G1 GLORIETTA 1	1 APOCALYPTO	2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM	3 BLOOD & CHOCOLATE	4 AGENT X44
G4 GLORIETTA 4	1 CHARLOTTE'S WEB	2 BABEL	3 THX APOCALYPTO GUARANTEED SEATS	
	4 HOLLYWOODLAND	5 STRANGER THAN FICTION	6 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM	7 BLOOD & CHOCOLATE
GB1 GREENBELT 1	1 APOCALYPTO	2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM		
GB3 GREENBELT 3	1 THX NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM GUARANTEED SEATS	2 THX APOCALYPTO GUARANTEED SEATS		
	3 HOLLYWOODLAND GUARANTEED SEATS	4 BABEL GUARANTEED SEATS	5 CHARLOTTE'S WEB GUARANTEED SEATS	
ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 THX APOCALYPTO GUARANTEED SEATS	2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM		
	3 CHARLOTTE'S WEB	4 BLOOD & CHOCOLATE	5 BABEL	
ACC AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 APOCALYPTO	2 CHARLOTTE'S WEB	3 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM	4 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX
M2 MARKET! MARKET!	1 APOCALYPTO	2 BLOOD & CHOCOLATE		
	3 CHARLOTTE'S WEB	4 AGENT X44	5 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM	

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AYALA CENTER CEBU	MARKET! MARKET!
Philippine Arts Festival February 10, 2007	Plan Holder's Day February 5, 2007

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Onstage — Repertory Philippines presents SONG & DANCE at REP's Globe Theater · February 9 to March 4, 2007
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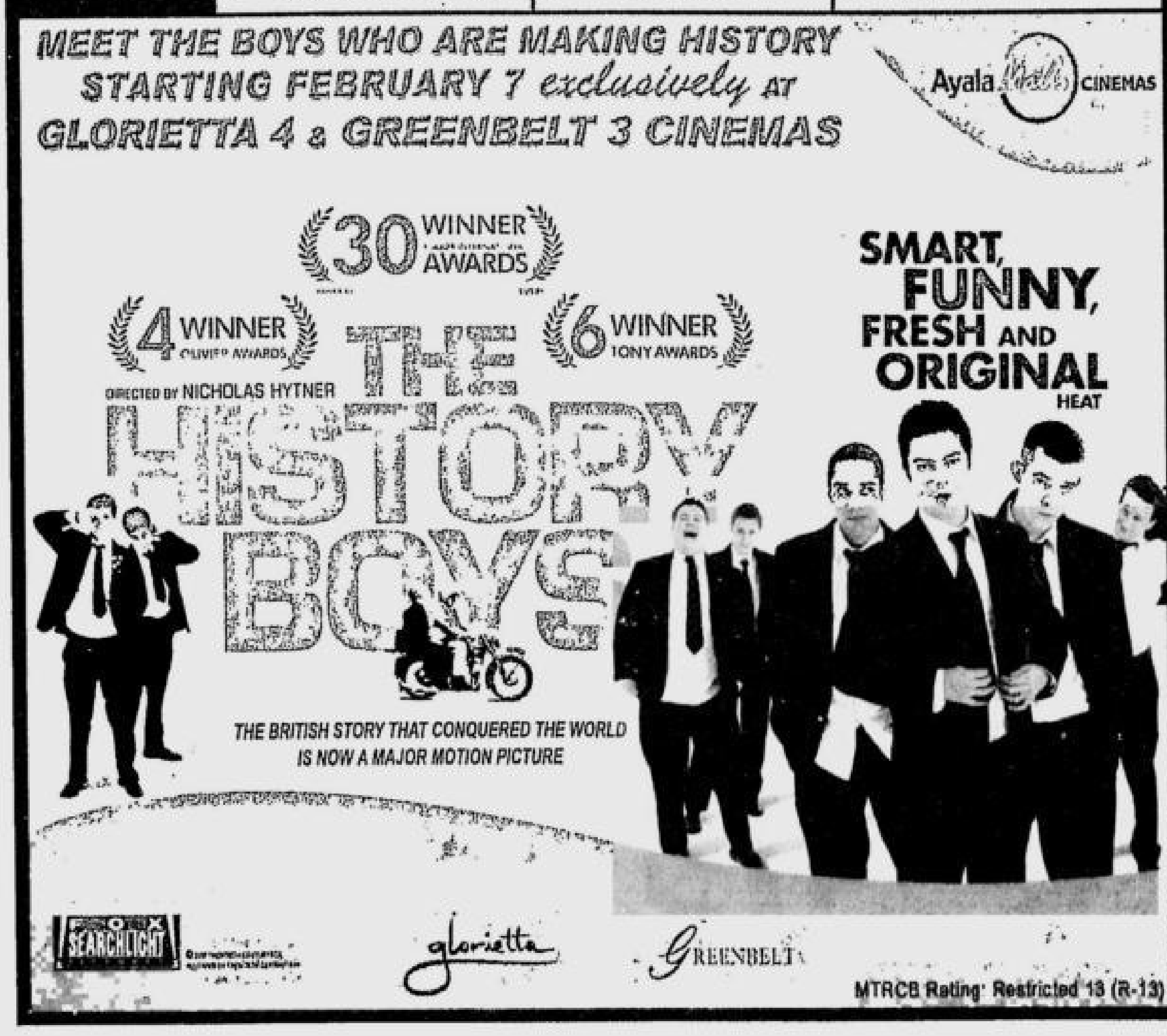
February 15 to March 27, 2007
For inquiries, please call 757-7117 to 21 or visit www.ayalamuseum.org



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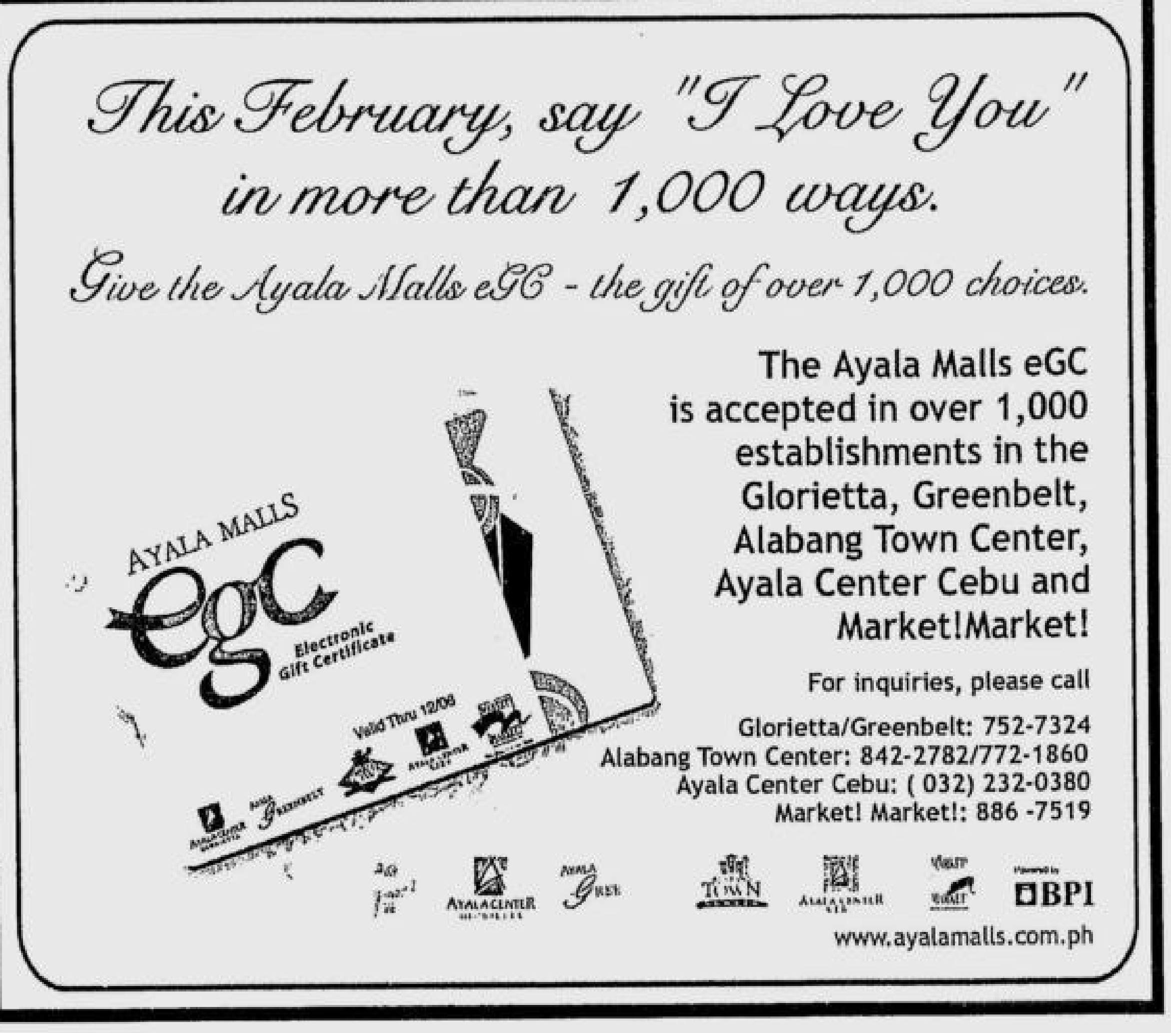

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'Charlotte's Web' makes smooth transition to screen

By Noelani Torre

FANS OF THE NOVEL "CHARlotte's Web" can breathe easy—the movie version of this 1952 classic by E.B. White, though not the equal of its source material, manages to get things right.

Gentle, sprightly, and chock-full of well-cast celebrity voice talents, the movie captures the essence of a book that has enchanted generations of young readers for more than half a century.

Farming community

Set in the idyllic farming community of Somerset County, Maine, this is the story of a runty spring pig, Wilbur, who is first rescued from the ax by a young girl and then, later, by an erudite spider. It's a story about friendship, the power of words, and the cycle of life that governs us all.

FANNING with her perky porcine co-star.

The story has been modernized a bit, but, thankfully, it retains the spirit and flavor of the original setting and dialogue.

There are no pop cultural references here, and the wisecracking animals are genuinely humorous, not just sly. When young Fern (Dakota Fanning) snatches Wilbur from her father and says, "It is unjust," her statement rings out compellingly.

Fanning is pitch-perfect as the stubborn, tender-hearted Fern Arable. It's hard to imagine another actress playing the part. Her Fern is sweet, but unsentimental—a no-frills girl who does what she thinks is right.

Julia Roberts, who voices Charlotte, the spider, also gives a good performance. Her voice is spidery-silky and maternal.

Voices

Other big stars who lend their voices to the production are Oprah Winfrey and Cedric the Entertainer as Gussy and Golly, the geese, respectively; Kathy Bates and Reba McEntire as sister cows, Bitsy and Betsy; John Cleese as Samuel, the sheep; Steve Buscemi as Templeton, the rat; Thomas Haden Church and Andre Benjamin as the crows, Brooks and Elwyn; Robert Redford as Ike, the horse; and Sam Shepard as the narrator.

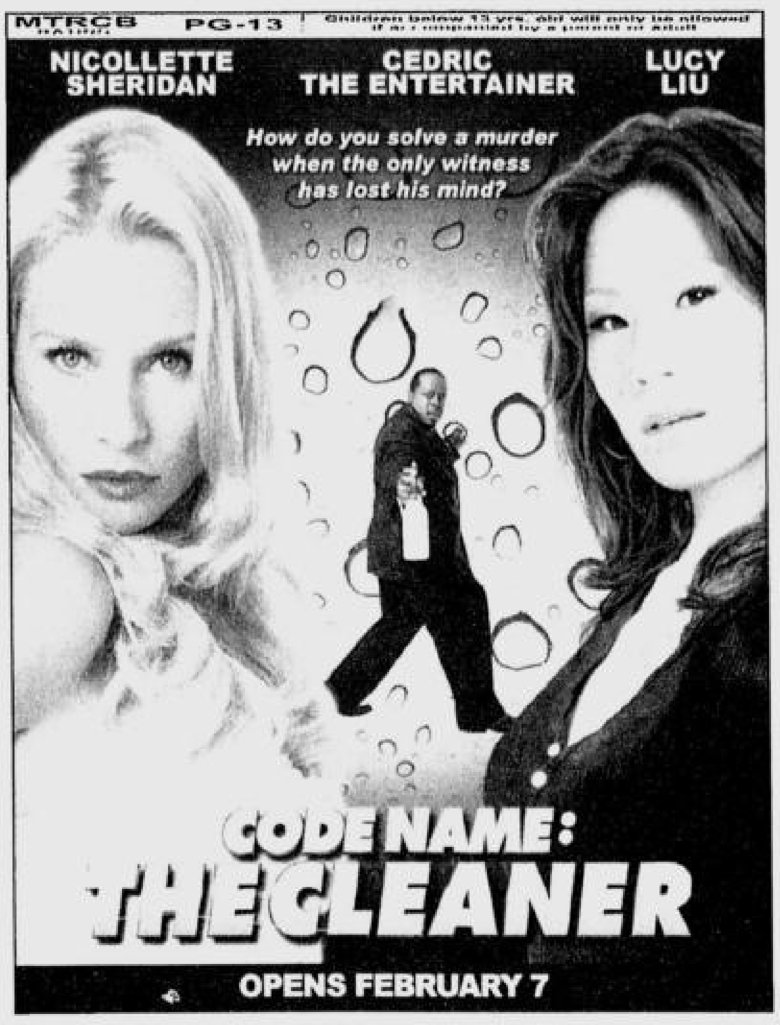
Their participation is overwhelming at first—you tend to play guess-the-celebrity—but after a while, you forget about their real-life personas as their characters flesh out.

Dominic Scott Kay, who voices Wilbur, isn't a star like the others, but he does very well in their company. His Wilbur will, in fact, remind you of that other famous talking pig who made his debut a decade ago, but he's no mere copy of Babe. E.B. White, after all, invented this talking pig long before Babe was imagined by his creator.

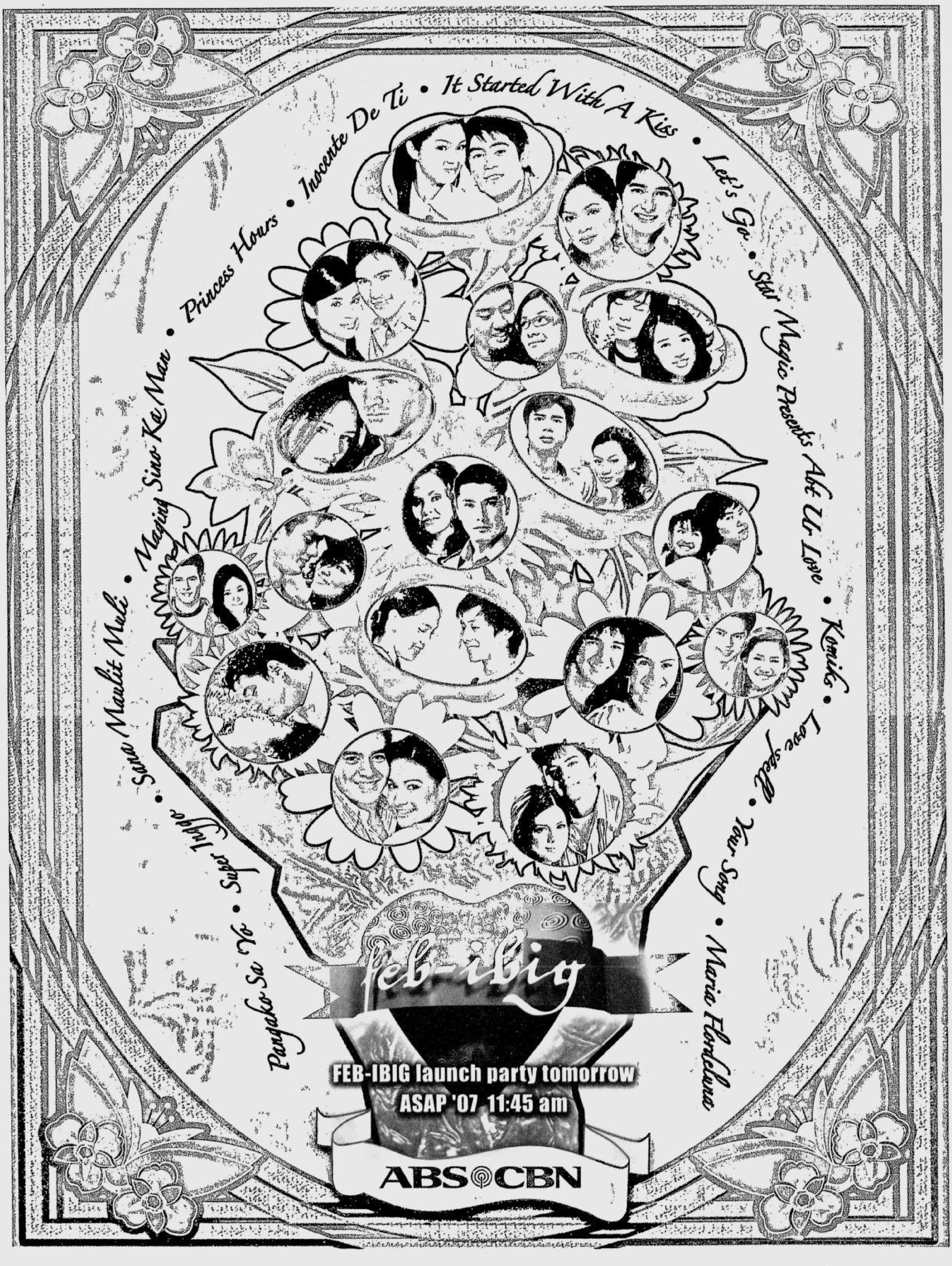
Comparisons

However, comparisons to "Babe" will no doubt be made. Certainly, this movie got its inspiration from that ground-breaking film, but director Gary Winick has ensured that you'll only have good comparisons in mind.

"Charlotte's Web" is a heartwarming film that will not only entertain you, but will also remind you about the more important things in life.



MTRCB RATING PG-13
NICOLLETTE SHERIDAN
CEDRIC THE ENTERTAINER
LUCY LIU
How do you solve a murder when the only witness has lost his mind?
CODE NAME: THE CLEANER
OPENS FEBRUARY 7



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A weekend of great value buys awaits shoppers during the 3-DAY SALE at SM City North Edsa, SM City Sucat and SM City Sta. Rosa on February 2, 3 and 4. The sale event – SM Supermalls' first for 2007 – offers a wide selection of merchandise tagged at up to 50% off. The value mix includes products and services of anchor stores, shops, restaurants and more.

---

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50% off
great selections

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february 2 • 3 • 4

Mall hours: **10am - 10pm**

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See mechanics poster for details

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TEXT SM TO 2366 & GET A CHANCE TO WIN

Every P500 single-receipt purchase (cash or charge) from SM Department Store, SM Supermarket, SM Hypermarket or from any participating mall establishment (food or non-food) entitles customers to join the raffle.

At stake are 60 units of Magic Sing MP3 Players (20 winners for each of the 3 malls).

The electronic draw is scheduled at 5 pm on Monday, February 5, 2007 at the ABS-CBN Interactive office.

Value shopping at SM City NORTH EDSA

Strategically located in the hub of the dynamic North Triangle area in Quezon City, the sprawling ***SM City North Edsa complex*** is truly the one-stop destination of thousands of shoppers who are on the lookout for value finds, good eats and wholesome fun. Mall hours extended 'til 11 pm on Friday and Saturday only.

THE BLOCK SM City North Edsa

Catch the excitement of first-class shopping, dining and entertainment at ***The Block***. Designed as the ultimate shopping destination of discriminating northside mallers, The Block houses dozens of high-end stores and boutiques showcasing signature merchandise.

CYBERZONE

Calling all techies! Hop on over to ***Cyberzone*** at SM City North Edsa, the coolest place to get wired to the latest gadgets and gizmos, and get connected to the latest mobile phones up for grabs in the 'Zone.

Family shopping at SM City SUCAT

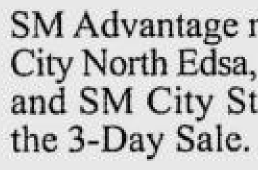
Great choices are in store for mallers at ***SM City Sucat*** on February 2, 3 and 4.

At ***SM Department Store***, shoppers are invited to avail of hefty savings on apparel, shoes and fashion accessories. At ***SM Hypermarket***, the whole family can enjoy picking out loads of specially-priced fresh produce and groceries. Personal care products and home appliances are also available at attractive discounts.

City shopping at SM City STA. ROSA

Just a few minutes away by car from the southern tip of the Metro Manila area lies ***SM City Sta. Rosa*** – city of fun, shopping and eating out.

Accessible to the towns of San Pedro, Biñan, Cabuyao, Canlubang, Calamba and Los Baños, SM City Sta. Rosa features an exciting showcase of hot buys during the sale events.



Parking spaces have been reserved for SM Advantage members at SM City North Edsa, SM City Sucat, and SM City Sta. Rosa during the 3-Day Sale.

- First come, first served
- Standard parking fee applies in SM City North Edsa.

SATURDAY*Special*

Substantial projects needed for Aga, Francine and Janno

By Nestor U. Torre

EVERY YEAR, LOCAL SHOW BUSINESS trots out a fresh batch of new talents to beef up the industry's roster of stellar talents. Periodic infusions of fresh finds are fine, but truth to tell, show biz has a number of established stars who haven't yet achieved their full potential, and that's a distinct pity.

Topping the "underutilized" list is—surprisingly enough—Aga Muhlach. Aga is one of local show biz's biggest and most bankable stars, but aside from his weekly sitcom, he's only occasionally visible onscreen.

MUHLACH. The underutilized actor is capable of more textured work.

Light and predictable

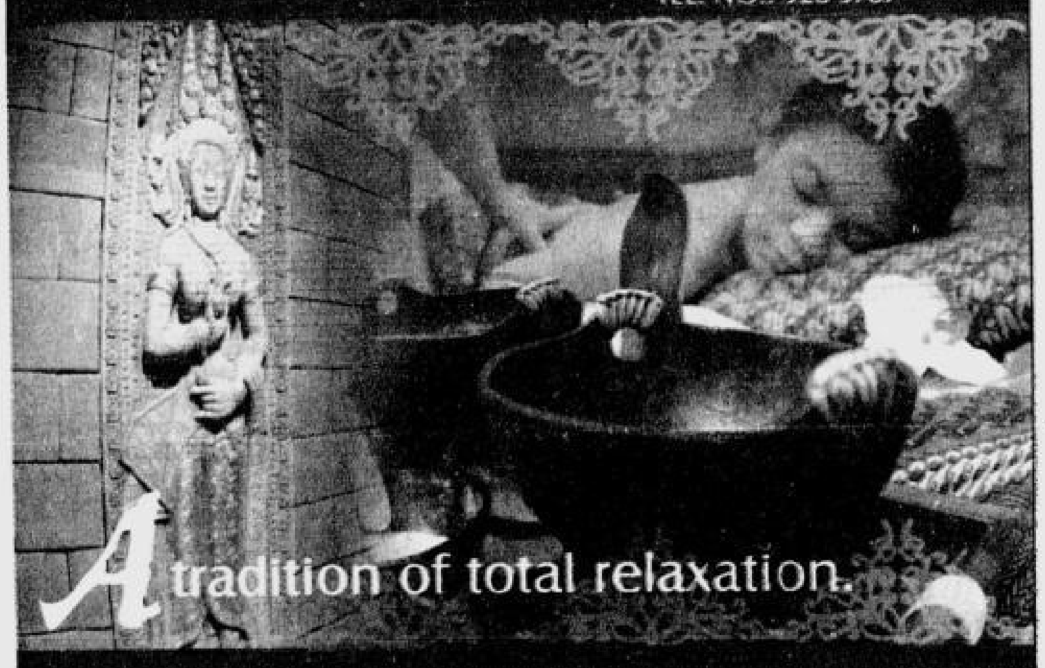
He makes a film only once every two years or so, and his recent starrers have generally been of the light and predictable romantic-comedy sort.

This is a pity, because when he puts his mind and talent to it, Aga is one of our most gifted and insightful actors, and is capable of much better and more textured work on the big and small screens.

Now that he's in his late 30s and has already feathered his nest, we hope that Aga decides to give his talent the care and challenge it deserves, and occasionally stars in a truly demanding project—for a change!

If his mainstream producers are nervous about it, he could do a budget digital film every year. Not only would he be helping indie movies get the attention and boost they deserve, but he would be able to come into his own as a mature actor—a new level that the

SUBSTANTIAL/ E2



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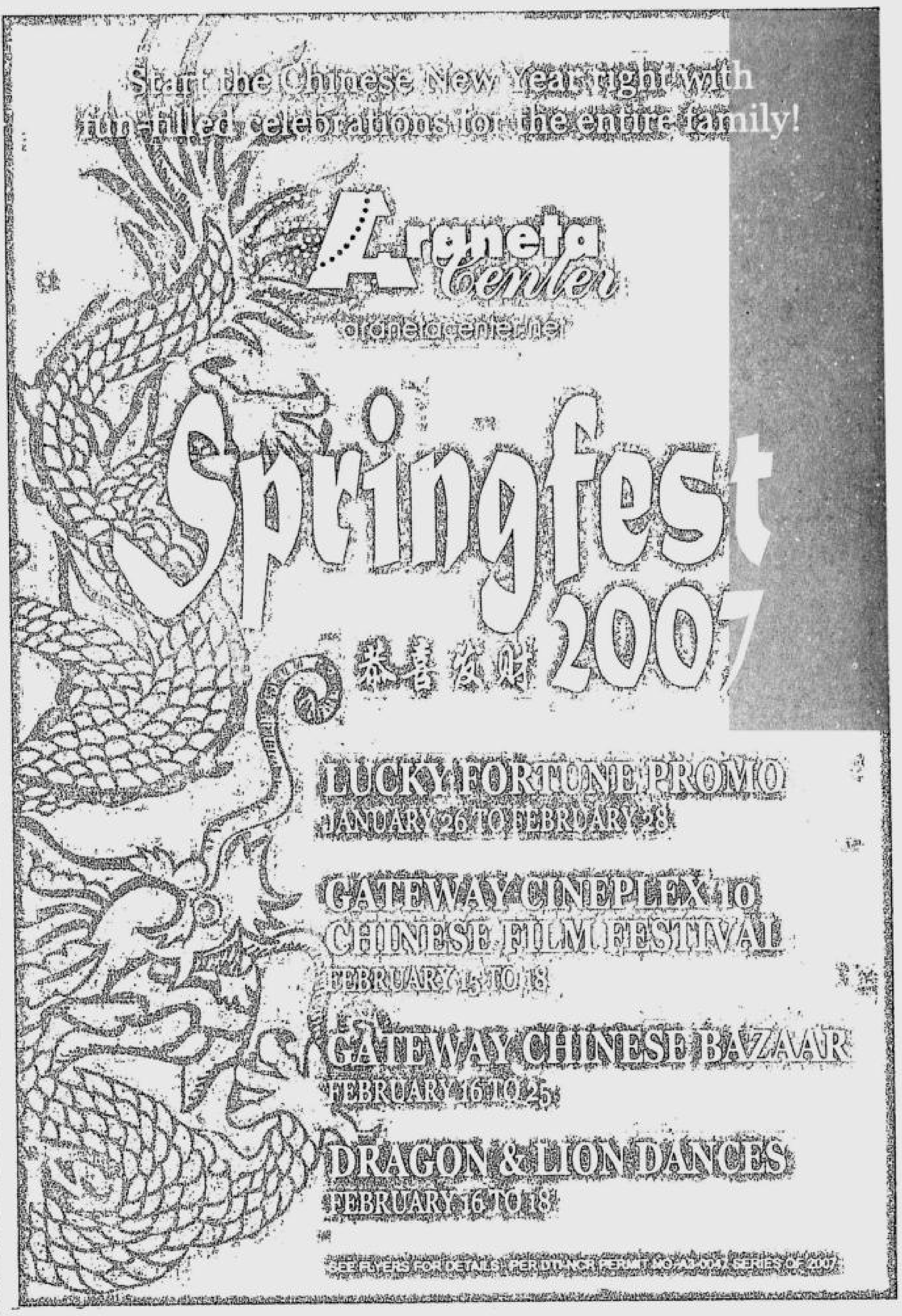

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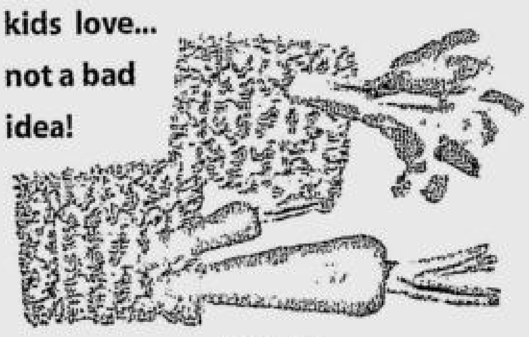

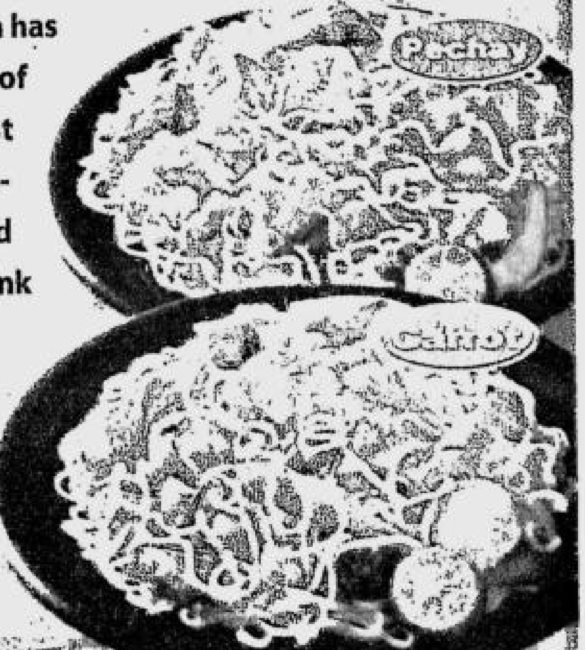

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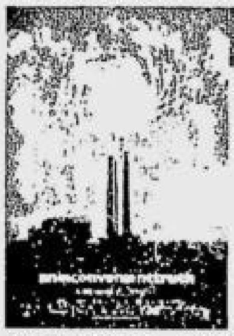

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2 APOCALYPTO
1:15 4:10 7:05 10:00

3 indieSine's Featured FILM: ICU BED # 7
1:30 3:30 5:30 7:30 9:30

4 BLOOD and CHOCOLATE
1:00 3:15 5:30 7:45 10:00

5 CHARLOTTE's WEB
12:20 2:45 5:10 7:35 10:00

6 NIGHT at the MUSEUM
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00

7 BABEL
1:30 4:20 7:10 10:00

8 LITTLE CHILDREN
1:30 4:20 7:10 10:00

9 SAW 3
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00

10 AGENT X44
12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50

ERMITA

1 APOCALYPTO
12:35 3:40 6:45 10:00

2 BABEL 12:00 2:30
SAW 3 5:10 7:25 9:50

3 BLOOD and CHOCOLATE
12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 10:00

4 LITTLE CHILDREN
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00

5 AGENT X44
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6 NIGHT at the MUSEUM
12:30 2:50 5:10 7:25 10.00

7 CHARLOTTE's WEB
12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 10:00

METRO EAST

1 ROB-B-HOOD
1:10 3:40 6:20 9:00

2 NIGHT at the MUSEUM
1:15 3:50 6:25 9:00

3 APOCALYPTO
11:55 2:25 5:55 9:00

4 BLOOD and CHOCOLATE
11:50 2:10 4:30 6:50 9:05

5 SAW 3
12:50 2:50 4:50 6:50 9:00

6 LITTLE CHILDREN
1:20 4:00 6:40 6:40 9:10

7 CHARLOTTE's WEB
11:00 1:25 3:50 6:25 9:00

8 AGENT X44
12:50 2:50 4:50 6:50 9:00

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1 APOCALYPTO
2 NIGHT at the MUSEUM
3 CHARLOTTE'S WEB
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1 CHARLOTTE'S WEB
1:30 3:55 6:20 8:40

2 APOCALYPTO
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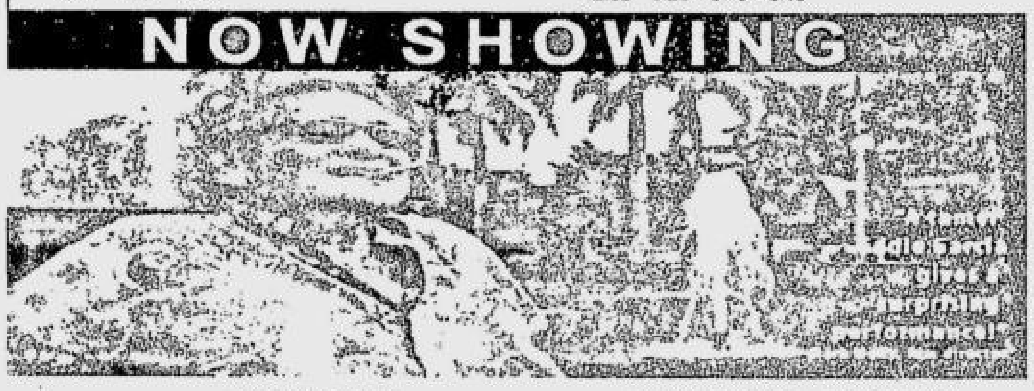

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3 A GOOD YEAR
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PRIETO. Time for a thespic stretch.

Substantial

From page E1

"safe" mainstream industry hasn't allowed him to reach.

We also wish that Francine Prieto does more real acting this year. The tall and gorgeous actress has become such a hit on TV that she topbills a number of popular shows, and that's all to the good.

What's unfortunate, however, is that TV acting is generally limited, shallow and knee-jerk, so Francine is making use of only a small part of her talent.

What she needs is a really good movie role that she can sink her thespic teeth into. If she does take that big step, she should surprise and dazzle everyone, and come into her own as one of the country's best young-adult actresses.

Challenges

In fact, we believe that Francine is so promising that she can even make it in international films. So, we hope that she doesn't rest on her facile TV laurels and opts to face new big-screen challenges both locally and internationally this year.

A foray into theater would be a great learning experience, as well. Go for it, Francine—you're only young once, and this is the time to stretch your limits and fulfill your true thespic and stellar potential.

Finally, Janno Gibbs should also get out of his comfort zone as a TV variety-show host and do more and much better work this year.

When Ronaldo Valdez's scion first joined show biz as a teenager, he came across as a gifted singer-actor for whom the sky was the limit. Alas, in only a few years, he had settled into easy and safe singing, acting and TV hosting stints that didn't do much to develop his impressive performing gifts.

Controversial

In fact, of late, Janno has been known more for his tempestuous and controversial personal life than for his performances. This is such a waste, because there's a lot of talent there, and talent needs to be brought to fruition.

Marital conflict and extramarital flings may be colorful and gossip-worthy, but when push comes to shove, they're really quite tiresome and predictable. So we wish that Janno decides to pay more attention to his God-given talent, and give his wandering eye a good, long rest.

Very definitely, Janno should go beyond TV hosting and do a big concert, cut a new album, and act in a challenging film—in other words, all of the talent-developing projects he should have been taking on all these years!

FORUM

Fans conceptualize projects for their favorite celebs

By Noelani Torre

FANS ARE EAGER TO SEE WHAT THEIR idols have in store for them this year, but they also have ideas of their own:

"I'm an enthusiastic admirer of the John Lloyd-Bea love team. I want them to do horror/suspense or comedy this year rather than the usual dramatic love story. I want to see them in a different light. They are both versatile, so I'm sure they can pull it off."*—Christine May Perion Estorque, 18, student*

"I haven't seen Nora Aunor doing a concert for so long. How I wish to see her in concert this year!"*—Rose Caleze, 48, high school teacher*

Serious actor

"I want to see Aga Muhlach do movies *ala* Brad Pitt (in 'Babel') or Leonardo DiCaprio (in 'Blood Diamond'). Enough of the feel-good romantic movies that pair him off with younger actresses. No offense to our younger artists, but Aga could become a very serious actor given the right project. I want to see him dirtied, doing violent action scenes! Please challenge his acting capability because I believe in his talent as an actor. Enough of the '*pa*-cutie-cute' roles, please! To our movie producers, please find a good project for Aga! I've had enough of seeing his talent go to waste! Are we just gonna sit here and watch him do all those commercials? *Pwede ba?!*"*—Debbie Tuazon, 45, call center agent*

"I am not exactly a fan of Nora Aunor, but it was during our time that she became a big celebrity—a Superstar! I grew up seeing her rise to stardom and, alas, I also saw her fall. I hope she recovers."*—Jose B. Biado, 54, self-employed*

"I want Kris Aquino to temporarily stop hosting her game shows and give her hosting chores to someone younger like Toni Gonzaga. That way, she can rest, and it will give the shows a different flavor. I want Toni to host a game show."*—Lady Christine M. Cunanan, 18, student*

Action movies

"I want to see John Lloyd Cruz doing action movies. I'd like to see how he would portray an action hero."*—Edna Agkis, 50, high school teacher*

"I want to see Angel Locsin star in a live-action adaptation of an animé series. I want her to portray Kaoru of 'Ruroni Kenshin.' I also want to see her play the antagonist in upcoming movies—a *kontrabida* with a twist, *para maiba naman.*"*—Hasmin de la Peña, 16, student*

"Versatility sets a talented actor apart from the rest. One actress who possesses that trait is Angelica Panganiban. But, I'd like to see her in daring roles, such as the ones Gretchen

FANS/ E5

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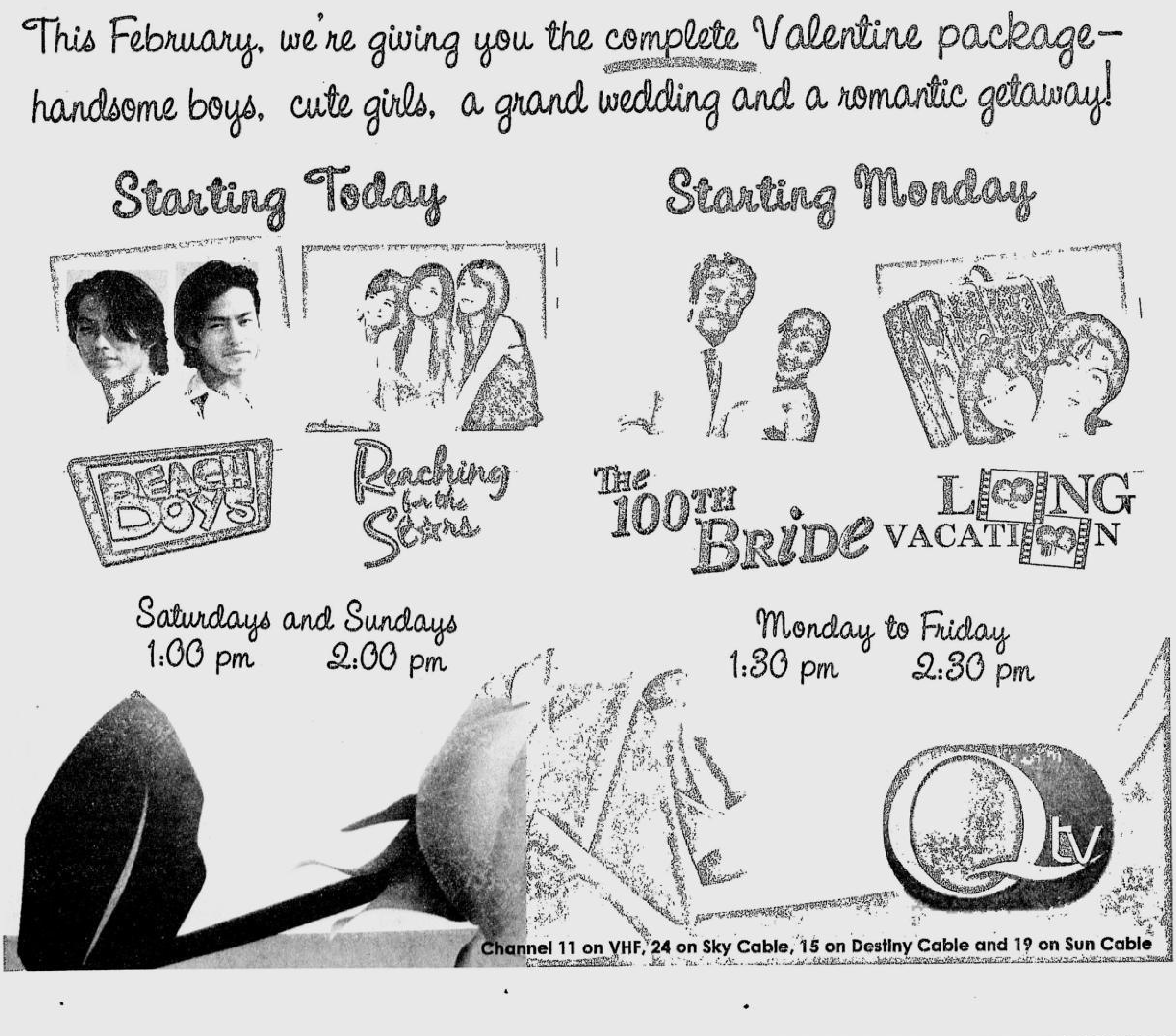

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Sharon starts busy year with Valentine concert

CUNETA. Will play an OFW in her movie for GMA Films.

By Remy M. Umerez

SHARON CUNETA IS starting her busy 2007 calendar with a pre-Valentine concert, "My Mega Valentine 2," on Feb. 10 at the Araneta Coliseum. The participation of Pops Fernandez and the Apo Hiking Society in the show excites her no end.

She explains: "This would be my first time to work with Pops, and I'm grateful to her for saying yes. I have always admired the music of Apo since I was a little girl. Their compositions had a big influence on me, and I'm thankful for the opportunity to record one of them ('Ewan')." Songs from the Megastar's triple-platinum album, "Isn't It Romantic?," will also be featured in the show.

On the movie front, two projects have been lined up for Sharon: The good reviews "Crying Ladies" received both here and abroad have inspired Sharon to co-produce another full-length feature with Unitel films (after "La Visa Loca"). Sharon is also scheduled to play an OFW for GMA Films.

Dangerous

Meanwhile, Sharon's efforts to lose weight are also slowly paying off. She is on a diet, but she doesn't want to divulge what type. She reasons, "I don't want my fans to imitate what I do because one man's metabolism is different from the next. I won't advise people to go on a crash diet, which I tried before, because it's a bit dangerous and has bad side effects. Hopefully, when I start filming, I shall have reached my ideal weight."

The Megastar is being praised for raising KC Concepcion well. She beams: "I'm very proud of KC *dahil mabait siyang bata.* She's not into show biz—and I'm happy about her choice. Her occasional appearances on the legitimate stage are more of a hobby. She's turning 22 in April, so I trust the decisions she makes in her personal affairs.

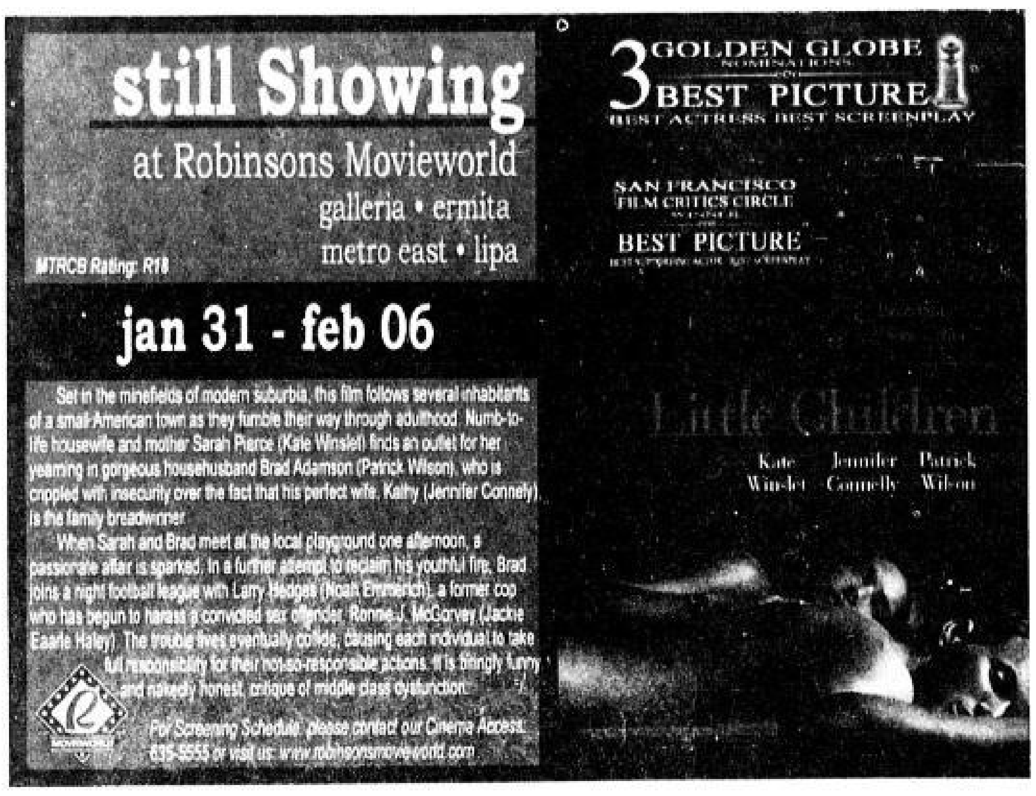
"It wouldn't be nice for me to do the talking about KC's lovelife. My only advice for her is not to commit herself to anyone just yet, since she's only home for a short while. She might change her mind once she goes back to Paris. One thing I'm pleased about is the fact that *disente ang mga lalaking na nali-*link *sa kanya.*"

Remake

Sharon isn't too enthusiastic about the planned remake of "Dear Heart," her debut movie. She reveals: "*Ang* feeling *ko,* it's like having a child *na kinidnap.* I'm possessive and protective of my work. *Kung hindi rin lang kamukha nina* Sharon *at* Gabby, don't bother *na lang.* Anyone who does it will most likely suffer in comparison.

"When ABS told me they were doing 'Bituing Walang Ningning' as a TV serial, I said, 'Since I don't own the copyright, *may magagawa ba ako?* When I saw it on television, they changed the background stories of the characters and tweaked it for Sarah. A remake sounds flattering, but be sure you do it right. Now, I want to buy the master negative of 'Dear Heart.'"

Do we see a political career in the future for Sharon? "Not a chance!"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Set in the minefields of modern suburbia, this film follows several inhabitants of a small American town as they fumble their way through adulthood. Numb-to-life housewife and mother Sarah Pierce (Kate Winslet) finds an outlet for her yearning in gorgeous househusband Brad Adamson (Patrick Wilson), who is crippled with insecurity over the fact that his perfect wife, Kathy (Jennifer Connely), is the family breadwinner.

When Sarah and Brad meet at the local playground one afternoon, a passionate affair is sparked. In a further attempt to reclaim his youthful fire, Brad joins a night football league with Larry Hedges (Noah Emmerich), a former cop who has begun to harass a convicted sex offender, Ronnie J. McGorvey (Jackie Eaarle Haley). The trouble lives eventually collide, causing each individual to take full responsibility for their not-so-responsible actions. It is bitingly funny and nakedly honest, critique of middle class dysfunction.

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SAN FRANCISCO FILM CRITICS CIRCLE
BEST PICTURE
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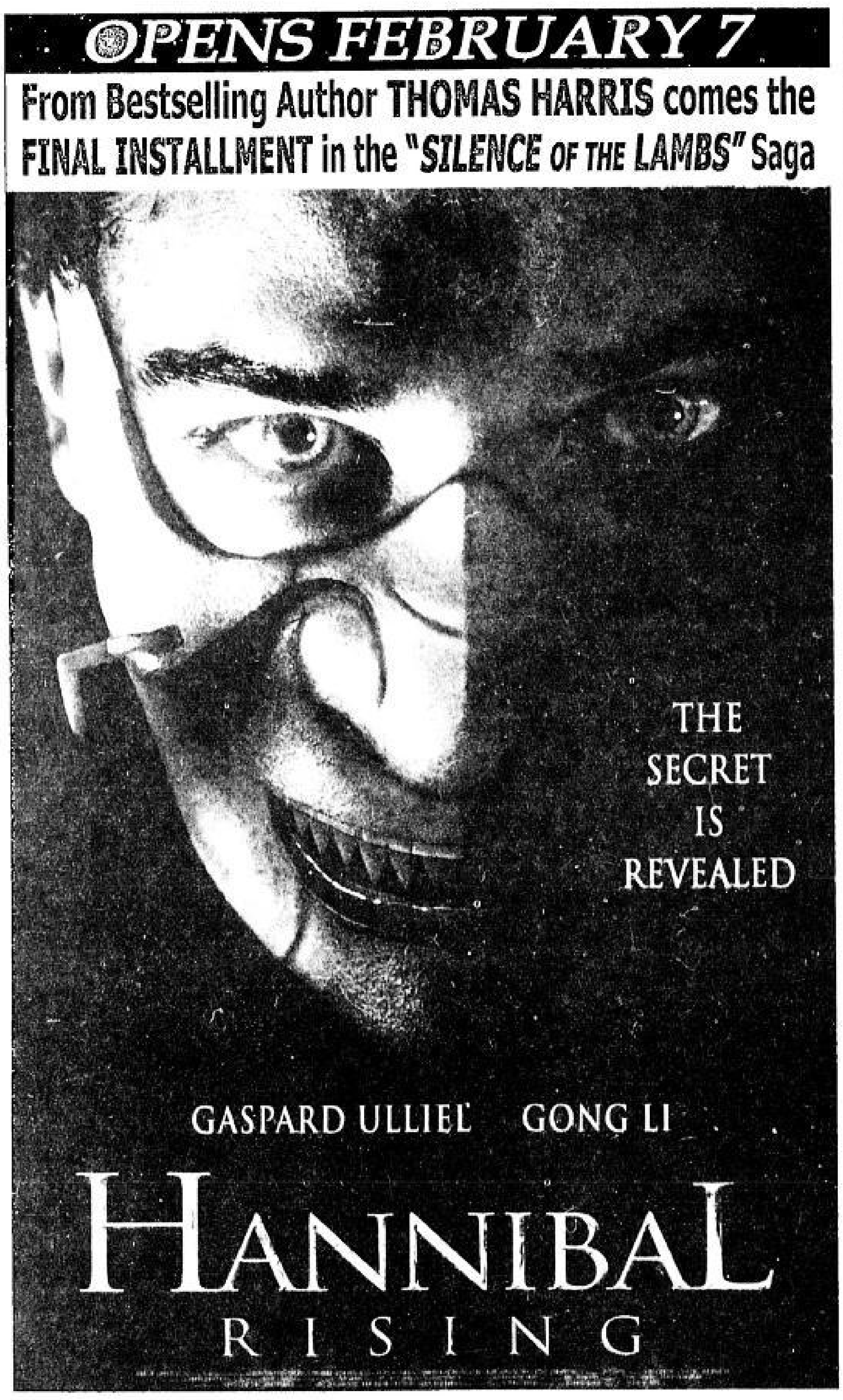
Kate Winslet Jennifer Connelly Patrick Wilson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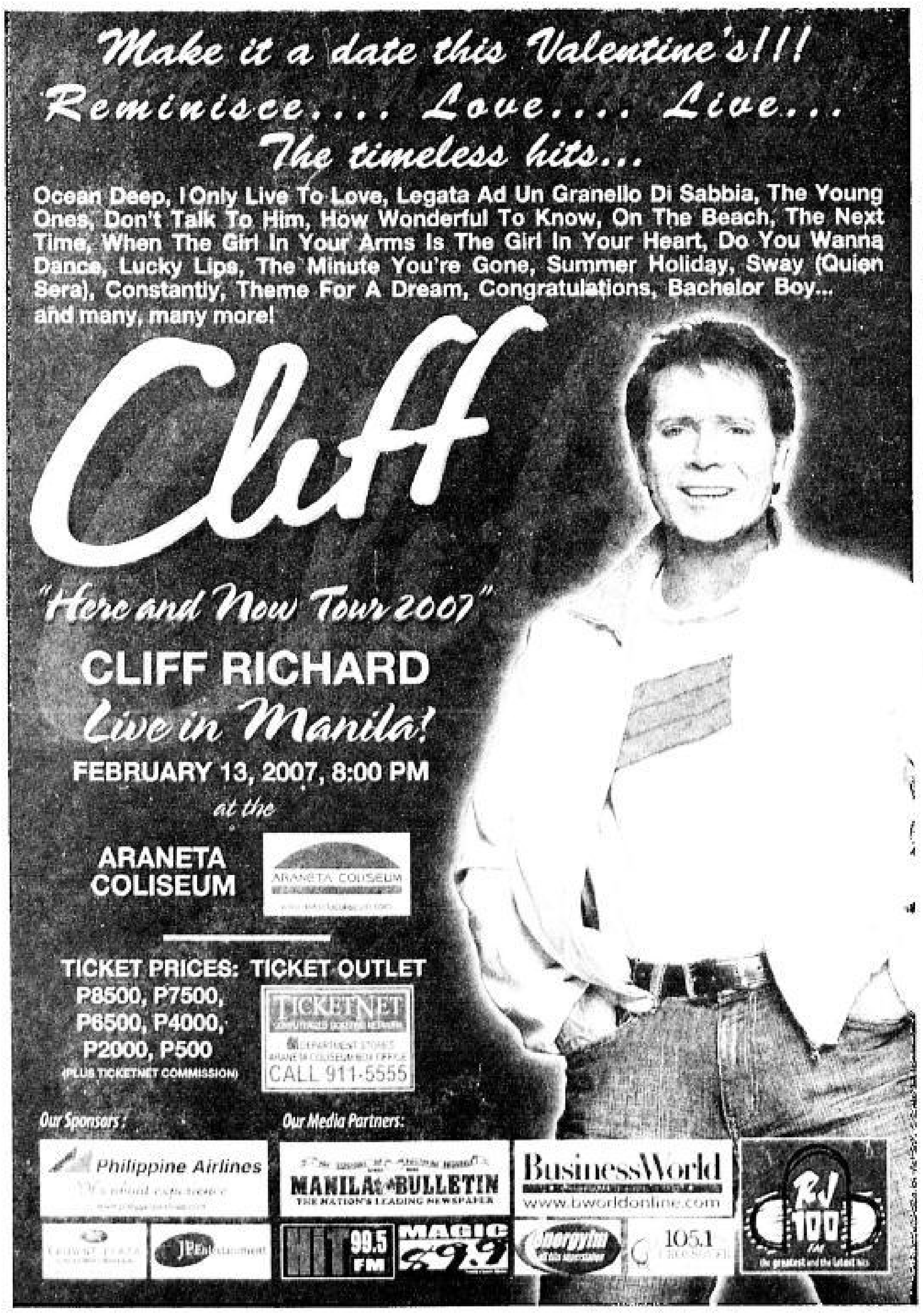
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APOCALYPTO 12:40 / 3:40 / 6:00 / 9:50
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HOLLYWOODLAND 1:25 / 4:15 / 7:05 / 9:55
BABEL 12:20 / 3:20 / 6:20 / 9:20
CHARLOTTE'S WEB 12:00 / 2:20 / 4:40 / 7:00 / 9:20
BLOOD & CHOCOLATE 12:50 / 3:05 / 5:20 / 7:35 / 9:50
NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM 11:20 / 1:50 / 4:30 / 7:00 / 9:40
AGENT X-44 1:00 / 3:10 / 5:20 / 7:30 / 9:40
SAW 3 1:10 / 3:20 / 5:30 / 7:40 / 9:50
APOCALYPTO 12:00 / 6:00 / 9:00
PLATINUM CINEMA

Alimall 5
BLOOD & CHOCOLATE 12:05 R3 / 1:40 / 3:55 / 6:10 / 8:25
NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM 1:00 / 3:30 / 6:00 / 8:30
APOCALYPTO 12:10 R5 / 1:50 / 4:50 / 7:50
AGENT X-44 11:55 / 2:05 / 4:15 / 6:25 / 8:35
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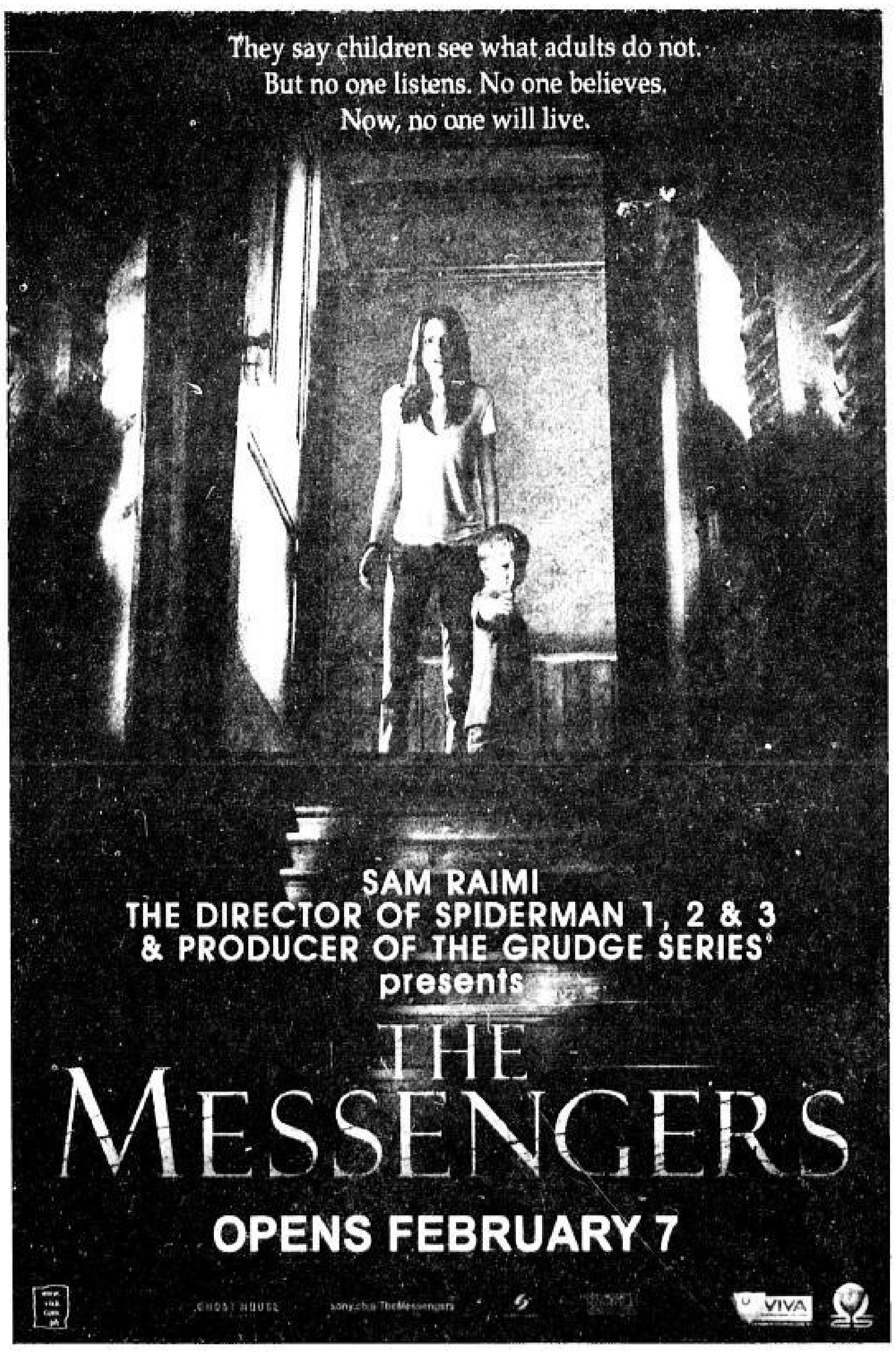
They say children see what adults do not.
But no one listens. No one believes.
Now, no one will live.
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OPENS FEBRUARY 7

STREET SMART

Basketball hero makes his mark

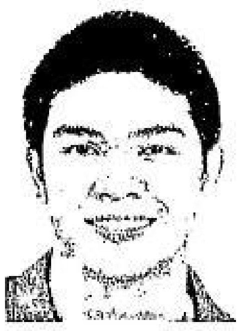
Mandy Navasero

WHEN ASKED WHAT made him a top basketball player, Joselito "Jojo" Duncil, who stands 6'1", always refers to his growing-up years in Balucluc, Apalit, Pampanga, where he first learned how to play the game.

He further honed his ability when his family transferred to San Pablo City. He fondly credits coaches Del Rosario, Parado, Codiñera and Jarencio for refining his skills.

70th season

Jojo is called the Growling Tiger by his teammates at UST, where he's a junior taking up AB Sociology. His team is preparing to defend its crown in the 70th season of the UAAP, which UST is hosting this year.



DUNCIL. UAAP's MVP.

Duncil led the triumphant UST squad to the UAAP championship last season, under the guidance of its new head, Goldie Pido.

Duncil's court heroics earned him the MVP crown. He will soon be seen donning Burlington socks as the brand's image model.

* * *

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Laurice

From page E6

Were we in show biz Heaven? No, these stars and VIPs were all human, and all really good friends of Laurice and Johnny's—so, on the warm and woolly and touchy-feelie level, the "significant" birthday bash was a great success. Talk about giving the well-loved celebrant a great, big-stellar group hug, this was it!

Happy Birthday, Laurice! May you have more healthy, productive and creative years to come. If 60 is indeed the new 40, you've only just begun!

Fans. . .

From page E3

Barretto did in her prime. She can easily compete with Judy Ann Santos or Kris Aquino at the box office. She has charisma."—*Jayson Leguiab, 26, call center agent*

"I want Judy Ann Santos to appear in suspense flicks similar to Kris Aquino's 'Sukob.'"—*Ma. Clarissa Rampola, 32, elementary teacher*

SHANG CINEPLEX

① APOCALYPTO
MTRCB. R-18
1.00, 4.00, 7.00, 10:00

② CHARLOTTE'S WEB
MTRCB. GP
12 00, 2 30, 5 00, 7 30, 10 00

③ NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
MTRCB. GP
12 00, 2:30, 5:00, 7:30, 10:00

④ BABEL
MTRCB. PG-13
12.05, 2.55, 5.45, 9:00

PREMIERE THEATRE
BLOOD & CHOCOLATE
MTRCB PG-13
12 40 3 00 5 20 7 40 10 00

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BLOOD AND CHOCOLATE PG13 1:45,3:55,6:05, 8:15,10:25	CHARLOTTE'S WEB G 12:55,3:15,5:35, 7:55,10:15	NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM G 12:55,3:20,5:45, 8:10,10:30
CHARLOTTE'S WEB G 1:25,3:45,6:05,8:25	BABEL PG13 1:40,4;30,7:20,10:10	APOCALYPTO R18 1:55,4:40,7:35,10:30

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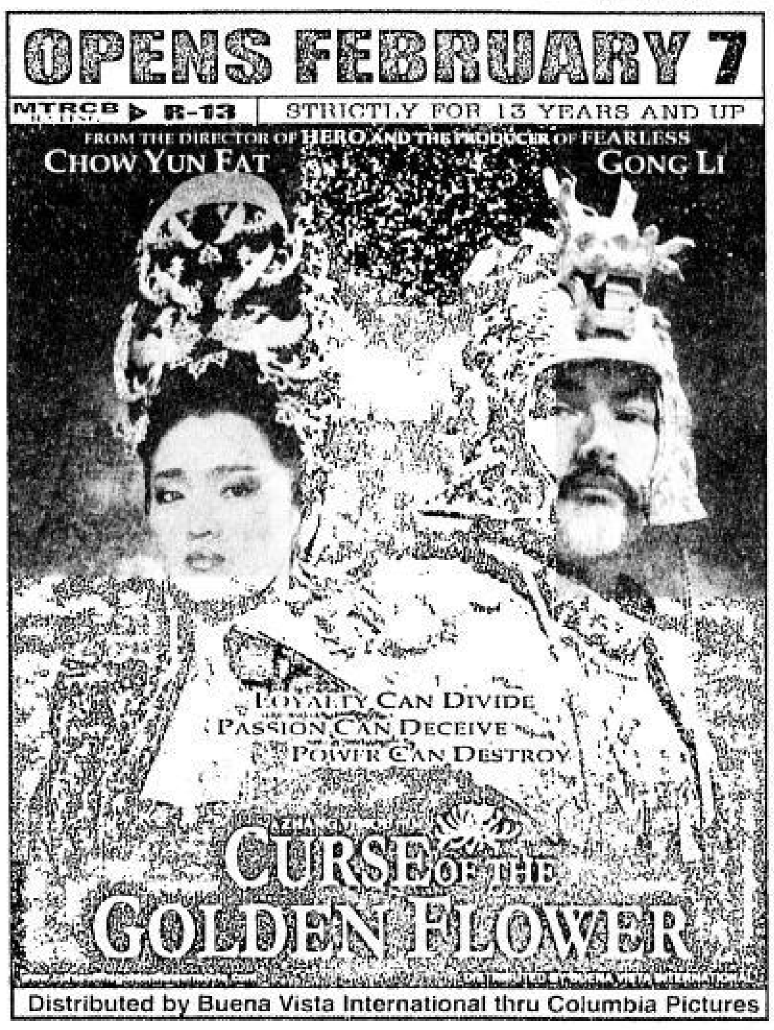

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POWER CAN DESTROY
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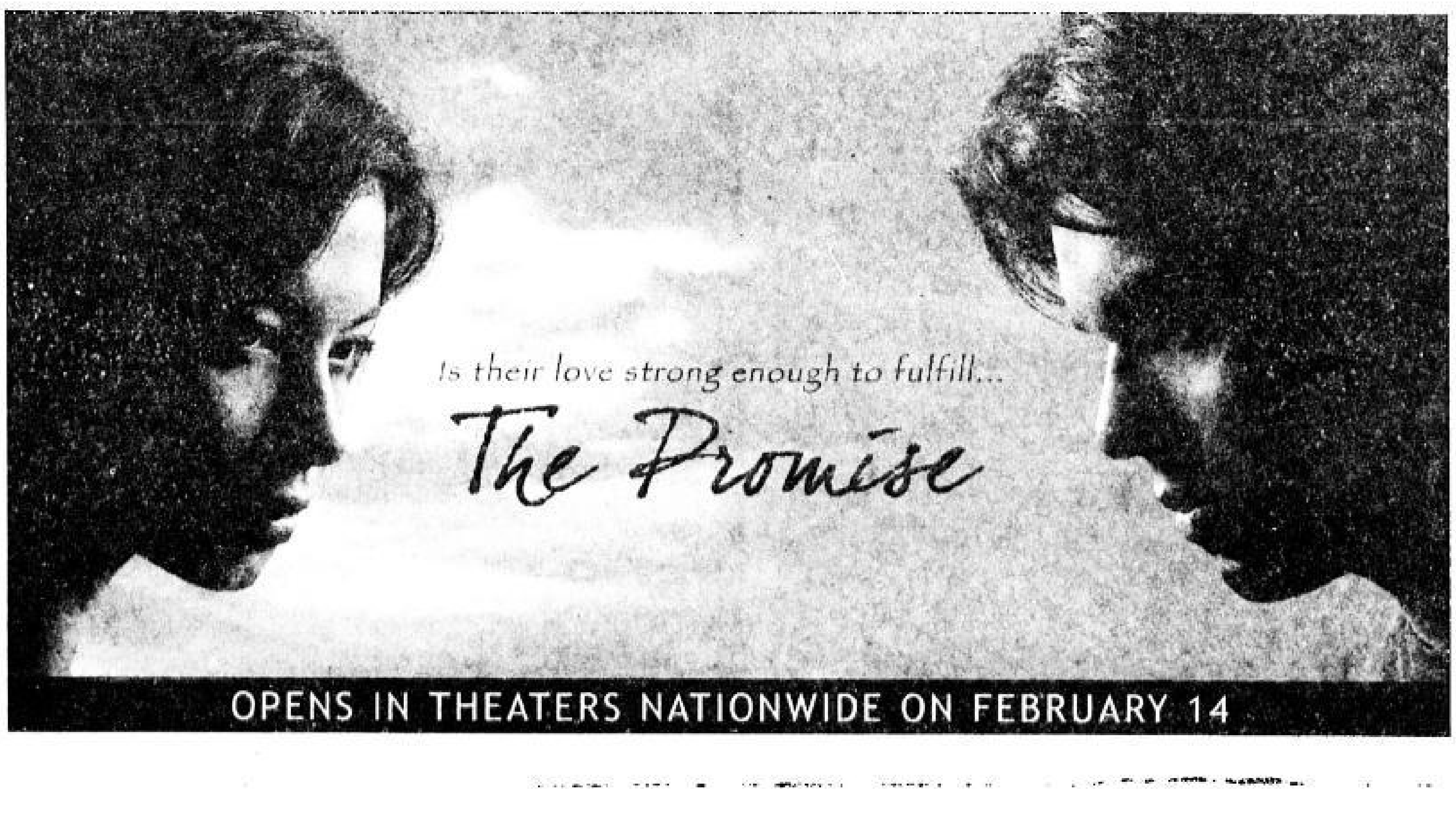

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3 (DOLBY) NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
4 (DOLBY) BABEL
PREMIERE
(DOLBY) BLOOD & CHOCOLATE

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2 APOCALYPTO
3 AGENT X 44
4 BLOOD CHOCOLATE

starmall
(Mandaluyong) tel. 7266180
3 ROB-B-HOOD
4 (DOLBY DIGITAL EX) BLOOD CHOCOLATE
5 RESRVED

metropolis star cinema
www.clickthecity.com.ph
(ALABANG) tel. 8504286, 6433994
1 AGENT X 44
2 BLOOD CHOCOLATE
3 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
4 APOCALYPTO

THEATRES
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2 AGENT X 44
3 SAW - 3

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Pacific Mall Lucena tel (042) 660-5271
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☆ BLOOD DIAMOND
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2 KASAL KASALI KASALO
3 BLOOD DIAMOND
4 APOCALYPTO
5 BLOD CHOCOLATE
6 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
7 CHARLOTTE'S WEB
8 SAW - 3
9 ROB-B-HOOD
10 AGENT X 44

Blue Wave
Sumulong Highway cor. Mayor Gil Fernando Street, Sto. Niño, Marikina City tel. 9341927
1 (DOLBY) BLOOD CHOCOLATE
2 (DOLBY) APOCALYPTO
3 (DOLBY) NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
4 (DOLBY) RESERVED

SUPER CINERAMA
Isetann Cinerama Complex Recto tel 7334228
1 (DOLBY) NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 APOCALYPTO
3 AGENT X 44
4 BLOOD CHOCOLATE
5 LITTLE CHILDREN

MARKETPLACE
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1 SAW - 3
2 SPIRIT TRAP
3 SUPER NOYPI
4 RESERVED

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2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
3 BLOOD CHOCOLATE

Center Mall Cinema
Baguio Center Mall, Magsaysay Avenue (Baguio City) tel (074) - (4449346)
1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 BLOOD DIAMOND

Jade Cinema
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5003 to 03
1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 APOCALYPTO
3 GRIFFEN & PHOENIX
4 SHAOLIN VS' EVIL DEAD

Centre Plaza Cinema
(Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007
1 AGENT X 44
2 ROB-B-HOOD

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1 (DOLBY) CHARLOTTE'S WEB
2 (DOLBY) APOCALYPTO
3 (DOLBY) NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
4 (DOLBY) BLOOD & CHOCOLATE

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2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
3 (DOLBY) BLOOD DIAMOND
4

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
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3 RESERVED
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Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771
1 MANO PO - 5
2 AGENT X 44
3 (DOLBY) ERAGON

Cinema 2000 Metrotown
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1 ZU WARRIOR
2 AGENT X 44
3 (DOLBY) SAW - 3
4 BLOOD DIAMOND

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Plaridel) tel (044) 795.3320
1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 AGENT X 44
3 (DOLBY) SAW - 3

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Gapan) tel. (044) 4867736
1 AGENT X 44
2 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA

Lianas Cinema
(Pasig) tel 640.4748
1 ERAGON
2 KAMASUTRA

Lianas Cinema
(Alabang) tel 850.1276
1 TENACIOUS-D
2 BOGBOG SARADO
3 PARAISO SA GUBAT
4 FRAGILE

Lianas MovieCity
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202
1 BOA
2 BEDROOM SECRET
3 AGENT X 44
4 BLOOD DIAMOND
5 KARIBAL

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790
1 LITTLE CHILDREN
2 AGENT X 44
3 KARELASYON
4 FRAGILE

Berma Cinema
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2 KAMASUTRA

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KOKO PIMENTEL AND JEWEL LOBATON

Blind date leads to life of compromise and marital bliss

By Rito P. Asilo

LEADING UP TO VALENTINE'S Day, we're featuring the love stories of some of our favorite celebrity couples as we take a peek into their private lives together.

To start the Valentine month, we decided to interview 1990 bar topnotcher, Atty. Aquilino "Koko" Pimentel III, and 1998 Bb. Pilipinas-Universe, Jewel Lobaton, over a leisurely breakfast at Club Filipino.

We have always been fond of the soft-spoken beauty queen because, in 2001, we co-hosted "Kool Iskul," an educational television program for kids in Mindanao, with her and actor-comedian Andy Bais ("Saan Nagtatago si Happiness?").

Back then, the dusky, statuesque beauty, was newly married to Koko, whom we'd occasionally see in social functions.

Common friend

Koko and Jewel meet on a blind date shortly after the latter relinquished her crown to 1999 winner, Janelle Bautista (who, according to PDI's Armin Adina, was later replaced by Miriam Quiambao).

Koko recalls, "I'd been asking a common friend to arrange a date with Jewel, but she was so busy during her reign that we couldn't find time to squeeze in a meeting. *Iniisnab niya ang abogado na gusting makipagkilala sa kanya!*

"When we finally met, she was no longer the reigning beauty queen. Of course, I would have been more thrilled if I met her while she was still wearing the crown. *(laughs)* Kidding aside, I was struck by the simple person behind the glamorous personality. Here was a beautiful woman who had a purpose in life!"

Stern demeanor

While Jewel was impressed with Koko's intelligence, attentiveness and gentlemanly ways, she was also initially turned off by his seemingly stern demeanor. She reasons, "He looked very serious—he was wearing a *barong*, had glasses on, he even brought his attaché case to our first meeting!

"I thought that first get-together at Shangri-La Makati was arranged to discuss the possibility of me cohosting a TV show with Koko, but the project didn't push through."

Koko laughingly remembers how Jewel's "amiable" nature would annoy him: *"Naiinis ako dati na parang lahat ng tao, kilala niya!"*

THE PIMENTELS. Opposites attract.

What came of that serendipitous meeting, instead, was a special friendship and a different partnership that culminated in marriage nine months later.

However, the couple's distinct personality traits posed a major problem early on in their marriage.

Koko recounts, "We both have strong personalities—I'm an introvert who'd rather stay home after a grueling day at the office, while Jewel's a former Sangguniang Kabataan and Singles for Christ leader who likes her occasional nights out with friends."

Indeed, there's more to the Ms Beauty-meets-Mr. Brains love story than the fairy tale ending that we know now. Koko and Jewel's romance, we later learned, is an inspiring lesson in compromise and marital harmony.

Koko relates: "We were polar opposites: *Malambing ang* speaking style *niya, ako naman, bruskong magsalita.* Even when I didn't mean to hurt, *nasasaktan siya. Ako naman, nagagalit, kasi hindi ko siya maintindihan!*

"At first, I also couldn't understand why she liked going out with friends. Why couldn't she just stay with the baby? (They have a wonderful two-year-old son, Martin.) That was a major adjustment for both of us! Later, you realize that, in any relationship, you have to go through a difficult phase and learn to compromise."

Differences

Despite their overt differences in personality, they later realized that, in their case, opposites indeed attract. Koko credits Jewel for teaching him patience. ("Because of Jewel's entry into my life, I have learned not to judge people anymore. Now, when I meet a person, I see Christ in him, *kaya hindi ko siya dapat i-*judge *agad.*").

Jewel, on the other hand, attributes her being more organized now to her husband's influence. ("He tells me that good organization saves time. Idol *ko siya sa* organization *ng* socks *niya!,"* she laughs.)

How do they spend time together? "We're just a simple couple with simple joys. We eat together—we love to eat!," Koko reveals. "She loves watching romantic movies like 'My Best Friend's Wedding'—which she saw six times! I like 'CSI' and 'Law and Order.'"

Jewel shares, "But, we both enjoy watching documentaries and programs on National Geographic. We share the same interests in science—and politics, of course.

"We believe in the same advocacies. We have the same passion—to serve those who don't have a lot in life."

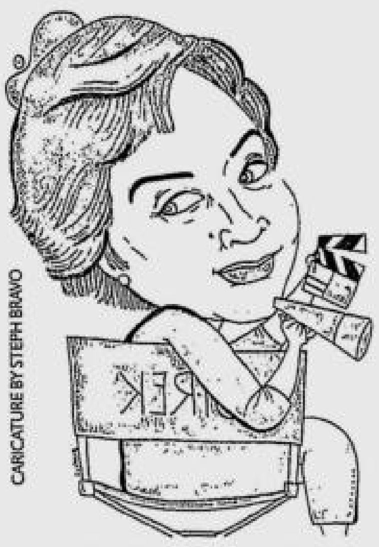
Dash of humor

The couple resolves problems on the basis of principles—and with a good dash of humor.

During the interview, Koko and Jewel heartily talked about how different they were—but we also saw the couple's similarities.

As we were leaving the restaurant, the ice cream bar Koko had ordered for dessert arrived. (Early on, Jewel decided not to order anything for dessert.) When we took a last look at the attractive, youthful pair, they were already sharing Koko's ice cream bar!

Laurice marks a special milestone



CARICATURE BY STEPH BRAVO

GUILLEN. She's only just begun.

By Nestor U. Torre

JANUARY WAS A VERY SPECIAL month for acclaimed actress, director, and film industry leader Laurice Guillen: She returned to acting in the theater after a hiatus of 30 years in "The Glass Menagerie" at the Ateneo (the play is still being performed, call 426-6000 loc. 5121). And, last Monday, she marked a significant birthday at the Pacific Plaza's North Tower at Fort Bonifacio.

We caught "The Glass Menagerie" at the Ateneo's Rizal Mini-Theater, and found Laurice playing Amanda Wingfield to her younger daughter Ina's Laura. Laurice's Amanda was less grandly theatrical and more internalized than other portrayals of the role, but the approach was right for the intimate venue.

Introspective

Fact is, even in her youth, Laurice was known for her introspective rather than all-out perfromances, so her take on Amanda was quite in keeping with the rest of her oeuvre.

For her part, Ina held her own as the tormented and physically challenged Laura. She was too pretty for the role, but she made up for that "flaw" by making her character internally distorted.

We don't want to add to Ina's already burdensome load of unfair demands and expectations, but we would love to next see her in Arbuzov's "The Promise," one of the gem-like productions that made Laurice's own thespic reputation some decades ago.

At Laurice's "surprise" birthday party last Monday, it was her and Johnny Delgado's older daughter Ana's turn to shine as she regaled her parents and their guests with a program of operatic arias and songs from musicals.

Ana is coming along well as a promising young classical singer, so she was completely in her element as she hit those ringing high notes with Karla Gutierrez and Jonathan Badon.

A-list guests

Laurice's felicitators were definitely A-list, with the all-star likes of (take a deep breath) Charo Santos-Concio, Malou Santos, Robbie Tan, Boots Anson-Roa. Tony Boy Cojuangco, Gretchen Barretto, Tirso Cruz III, Edgar Mortiz, Ricky Davao, Nes Jardin, Tess Rances, Rudy Fernandez, Lorna Tolentino, Amy Austria, Olive Lamasan, Maan Hontiveros, Gil Portes, Cesar Montano, Sunshine Cruz, Isabel Rivas, Ali Sotto, Tess Fuentes, Leo and Gina Martinez, Mel Chionglo, Gina Alajar, Michael de Mesa, Rez Cortez, Ricky Abad and Mark Meily—!

LAURICE/ E5

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Dito pinaka-happy ang party!
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